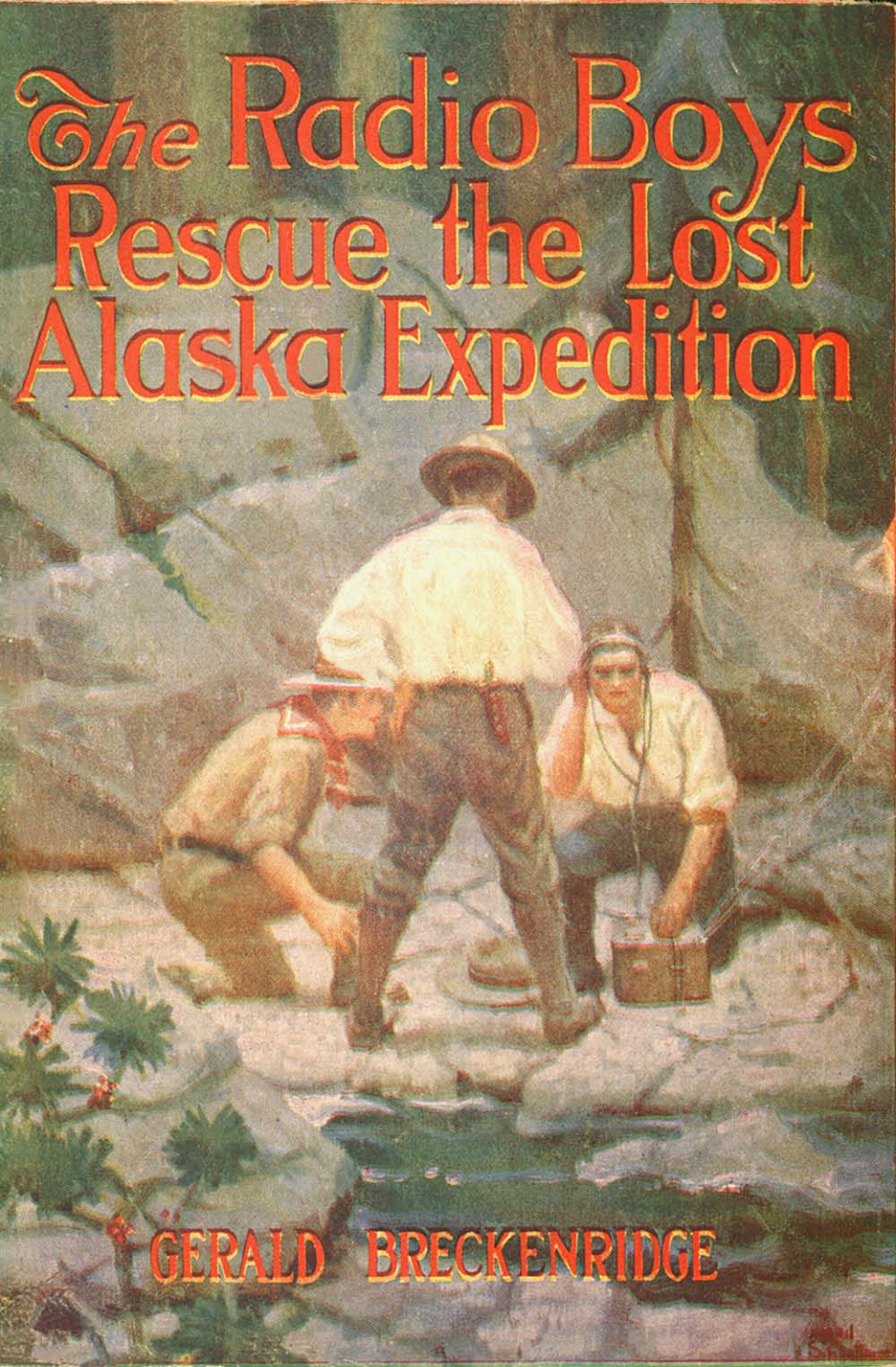
The Radio Boys Rescue the Lost Alaska Expedition



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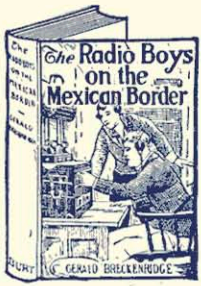

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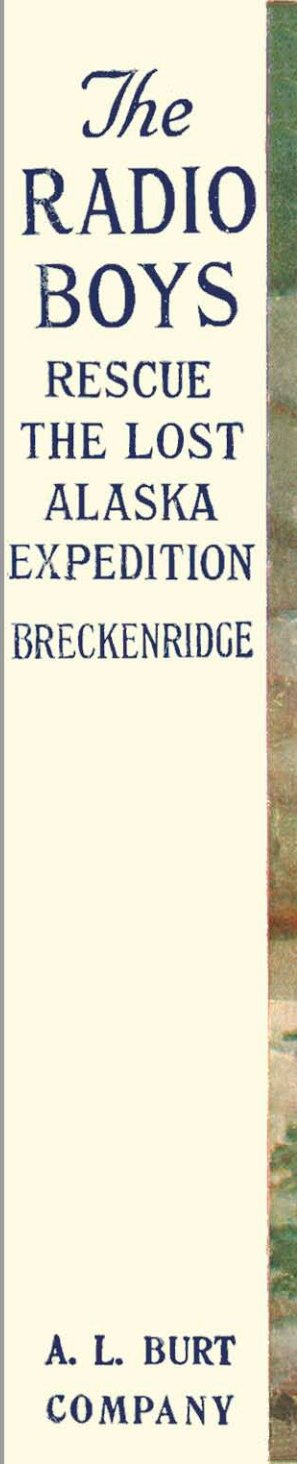

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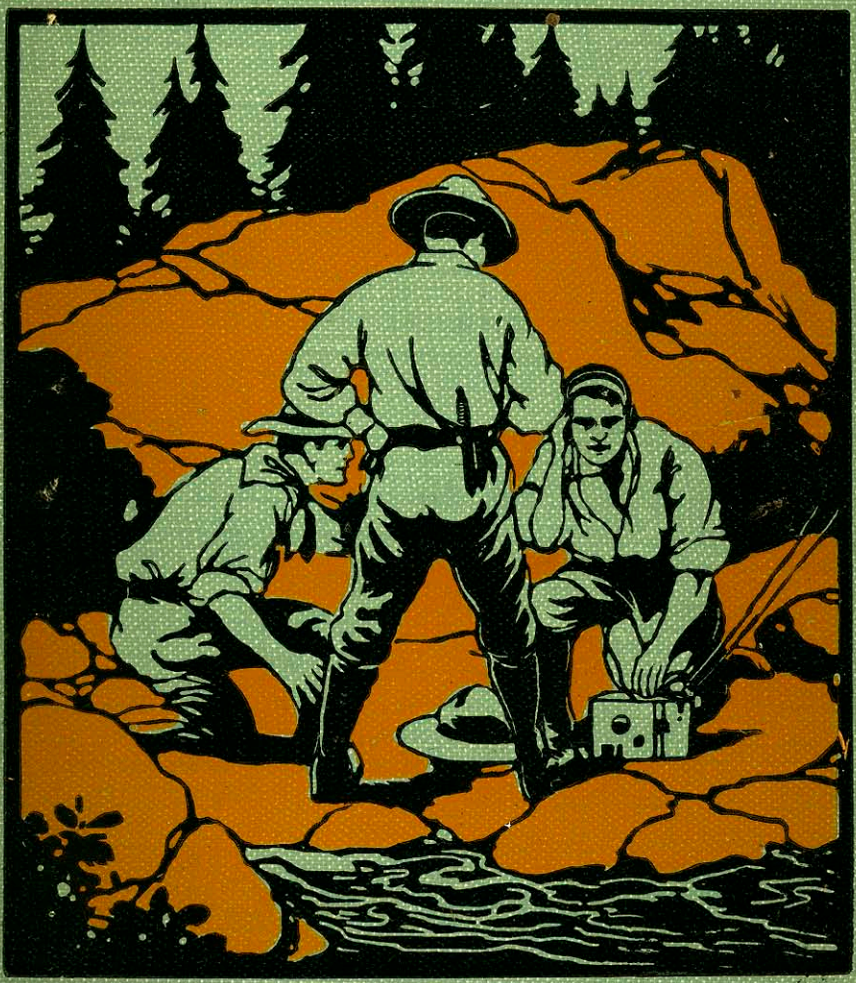
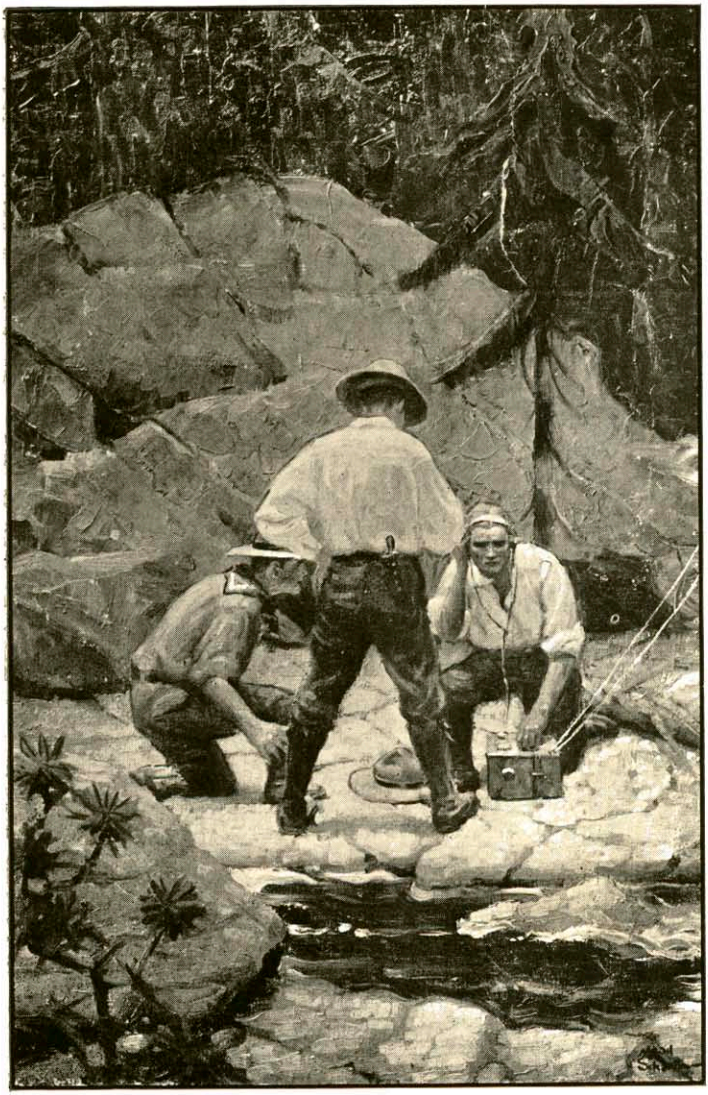


Gerald Breckenridge

To John Jr.
From Mother
Xmas 1922



"What does she say, Frank? Any luck yet?"
(*The Radio Boys Rescue the Lost Alaska Expedition*) *Page 40*

THE RADIO BOYS
RESCUE THE LOST ALASKA EXPEDITION

By GERALD BRECKENRIDGE

Author of

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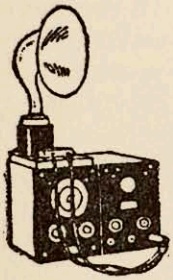

Frontispiece

A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York

THE

RADIO BOYS SERIES

A Series of Stories for Boys of All Ages

By GERALD BRECKENRIDGE

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The Radio Boys Rescue the Lost Alaska Expedition

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By A. L. BURT COMPANY

THE RADIO BOYS RESCUE THE LOST ALASKA EXPEDITION

Made in "U. S. A."

THE RADIO BOYS RESCUE THE LOST ALASKA EXPEDITION

CHAPTER I.

THE LOST EXPEDITION.

"STRANGE that you boys should be talking about the 'Lost Expedition.' "

"Oh, hello, Dad. Why strange?"

"Because I have just come from a conference with a man who knows all there is to know about it. And he was telling me—."

Mr. Hampton advanced from the doorway into the sitting room, and looked at the faces of the three boys in turn. They were his son, Jack, and the latter's chums, Bob Temple and Frank Merrick, who together had gone through many adventures related in other books of "The Radio Boys" series.

It was the sitting room of a suite in a Seattle hotel. Here the four, arriving from South America, after finding and losing "The Enchanted

City of the Incas" as told of in "The Radio Boys Search for the Incas' Treasure," were ensconced on their way to their Long Island homes.

"Well, Dad, what was this man telling you?"

"Yes, Mr. Hampton, tell us," added Frank "We're curious."

"What do you know about the 'Lost Expedition?'" countered Mr. Hampton. "I stood in the doorway unobserved a moment and heard you discussing it."

"Nothing but what this article in the Sunday paper tells," said big Bob, grumblingly, "And the fellow that wrote this yarn didn't know very much. It's mostly talk."

Mr. Hampton nodded.

"Speculation, I suppose," he said. "Well, that's the best the writer could do. The facts aren't generally known. However, wait a minute until I get off this wet coat and get into something comfortable. It's raining again."

"Raining again?" said Jack. "Doesn't it ever stop here?"

"Oh, that's just the Seattle Winter," said his father. "The rains are necessary, and, really, they are so mild one doesn't mind them after a time."

"Huh," grumbled big Bob. "I'd think these people would grow web feet."

"Look here," said Mr. Hampton, after geting into

his smoking jacket and slippers. "What I learned today ought to interest you boys."

"Why, Dad?" Jack leaned forward eagerly.

"Well, wait until I tell you a bit about it," said his father. "Then you'll see,"

Then, while the three young fellows paid close attention, Mr. Hampton proceeded to relate the story of the "Lost Expedition" so-called, the expedition headed by Thorwald Thorwaldsson, the Norwegian explorer, which had outfitted at Seattle the previous Spring, set out for an unnamed destination in the Far North, and had never been heard of since.

A great deal of secrecy as to its objects had attended the departure of this expedition in its sturdy schooner, and many were the wild guesses and surmises concerning it advanced in the papers and among the hangers-on along the Seattle waterfront. Some said confidently that the expedition was going to attempt to reach the North Pole by airplane, for an airplane was carried dismantled on the schooner. Others declared the object sought was gold. And, in this regard, the vague rumors of vast gold fields found in the past by this or that old-time prospector who died without making his secret public, were brought to light and furbished up with a wealth of apocryphal detail in order to bear out the contention.

"But none of these assumptions," said Mr. Hampton, "was correct. The real object of the expedition never was made public, for the very good reason that none of those in the know—and their numbers are few—ever betrayed a word, or hint, of the secret."

"And you know it?" asked Jack, with quickened interest.

Mr. Hampton nodded, and smiled teasingly.

"Come on, Mr. Hampton, tell us," said Frank.

"You better, Mr. Hampton, or he'll burst with curiosity," advised big Bob. "Show that boy a secret and he's not content until he takes it apart."

"How about yourself?" said Frank, indignantly. "I suppose you don't care to hear, hey? Oh, no."

Mr. Hampton interrupted.

"Wait a minute, Bob. No need to perjure yourself. I know all you boys are eager to know the answer to the mystery of the 'Lost Expedition.' Well, I can tell it to you in one word. It is—"

He paused. Then added:

"Oil."

"Oil?"

All three listeners asked the question as if in one breath. Big Bob was no less inquisitive than the others, despite his twigging of Frank for his curiosity.

Mr. Hampton nodded.

"Yes," he said. "Oil."

For a moment he was silent, collecting his thoughts. Then he leaned forward, cleared his throat and continued:

"Perhaps my words are a disappointment to you. The Northland for you, probably, is invested in a mysterious glamor. It means either men struggling through incalculable hardships to win their way to the North Pole, to the top of the world, or else fighting against all the mighty forces of Nature in a grim, ice-locked land to wrest a stream of golden wealth from the bosom of the Earth.

"Ah, yes," he continued, smiling slightly, "I know how you feel. Whenever our preconceived and heroic notions are upset we feel a sense of disappointment. But, consider for a moment, the meaning of this matter. Here, far away in the Northland, in a remote district to which so far as known only two white men have ever penetrated, lies a mighty river flowing north into the Arctic Ocean, along the banks of which are such vast deposits of oil that it oozes through the soil and into the river to such an extent that the river in reality is a river of oil and never freezes."

"A river of oil that never freezes, Dad?" said Jack. "Do you expect us to believe that?"

"And flowing north, too?" said Frank, whose

quick mind had seized upon that point of contrariety in Nature.

Mr. Hampton smiled.

"Well, boys, it is hard to believe, I'll admit," he said. "Yet that this river does flow north is undoubted. That it never freezes, however, is an exaggeration. The truth is, probably, that at spots so much oil seeps into the water that soft spots are formed.

"Hitherto," he continued, "there have been only two rivers known that flow north into the Arctic in that region—the MacKenzie and the Coppermine, along the shores of which are vast deposits of copper that some day, undoubtedly, will be opened up to exploitation. However, this other northward-flowing river in the midst of a vast oil field must now be added to the list, if the word of the lone explorer is to believed, of the one man who has been there and lived to return with the tale."

"But I thought you said this river was known to two white men, Dad?" objected Jack.

"So I did. So I did," declared his father. "And two there were—Cameron and Farrell. But Cameron died on the trip to the outside, and Farrell alone lived despite incredible hardships, to finally reach Edmonton with the tale. Now he, too, is gone—for he was a member of Thorwaldsson's 'Lost Expedition.'

"When he reached Edmonton, a thriving Canadian city, Farrell, an adventurous fellow who at one time had worked in the Southwestern oil fields as an employee of the syndicate of independent operators which once employed me there as superintendent, realized the value of his discovery and kept his mouth closed until he got in touch with Anderson, the big man of the syndicate. Anderson saw at once the importance of the find. But he also saw that Farrell's marvelous oil field would virtually have to be rediscovered before steps to develop it could be taken. For, in struggling through to the outside, Farrell had suffered the loss of his compass, had been turned about in Winter fogs, had lain delirious for a long period in the igloo of friendly Eskimos within the Arctic Circle and, in general, had suffered so many hardships that his mind was clouded and he had no clear idea of where lay this oil field.

"Anderson, however, placed such faith in Farrell's report that he decided to outfit an expedition to retrace the footsteps of Farrell and Cameron into the Arctic in the hope of thus once more coming upon the oil field. Inasmuch as they had gone in through Alaska, that was the way which Thorwaldsson's expedition took."

Mr. Hampton paused. Jack, who had been eyeing his father closely, now put a hand on his arm.

"And now what, Dad?" he asked.

"Now Anderson wants me to attempt to go after the 'Lost Expedition' and try to relocate the oil fields as well as find some trace of Thorwaldsson," said Mr. Hampton.

"I thought so," said Jack, in a tone of satisfaction. "When do we start?"

"We?" Mr. Hampton chuckled. "I like that. Just as cool as you please about it, too. We? Well, well."

"Do we leave at once?" asked Jack, imperturbably, not one whit disturbed by his father's pleasantry.

Mr. Hampton shook his head.

"Whether I take you at all is questionable," he said. "Certainly, I have no intention of going at once. If I go at all, it will not be until the Arctic Summer begins."

"Meantime, I suppose, I'm to return to Yale."

"Yes, you've missed a half year, thanks to our adventures in search of the Incas' treasure in South America, but that is no reason why you should miss the balance of the term. I'll tell you what," he added, taking pity on the three, "if you fellows go back to college and study hard to make up for lost time until Summer, and if the 'Lost Expedition' is still lost at that time, why, I'll see what can be done."

"Hurray," cried Jack. "That's a promise."

CHAPTER II.

SETTING OUT FROM NOME.

"WELL, boys, where do we go from here?"

It was Frank who asked the question, and he sat on a heap of luggage on the beach at Nome, with Jack and Bob beside him looking alternately at the mountain beyond the Alaskan outpost and at Mr. Hampton deep in conversation with a short sturdy figure of a man, clad in khaki breeches, high leather boots and a flannel shirt, a short distance away. The figure was that of Tom Farnum, scout of the independent oil interests at Nome.

It was Summer, and Summer in Alaska as the boys were beginning to realize meant hot weather, indeed. All had their coats off, and were perspiring. Only an hour before they had been put ashore by the steamer from Seattle, and Mr. Hampton had left them on the beach with their luggage while he went in search of Tom Farnum, who had failed to meet them at the landing as they had expected.

"Where do we go from here?" Jack repeated

Frank's question. "Well, if you ask me, almost any place would be better than Nome."

He looked with disfavor at the little town sprawling at the base of the mountain.

"Not just what I expected," he said. "I've heard of Nome all my life, it seems, and now, just look at it. Why,. it's hardly a spot on the map."

"But what a history it has had, Jack," said Frank. "Don't judge by appearances too much. Remember this town has seen the Gold Rush."

"I wonder what Dad is talking about," said Jack, ignoring Frank's remark.

"Probably discussing how soon we can get away," said big Bob, speaking for the first time. "At any rate," he added, "I see your father and his companion pointing to that gasoline schooner off shore."

At this moment, their doubts were resolved, for Mr. Hampton and his companion ended their conversation and approached the boys.

"Well, boys, we'll soon be under way," said Mr. Hampton. Whereupon he introduced Farnum all around. The latter was a prepossessing man with a weather beaten face and a grizzled mustache, above which jutted a promontory of a nose between deep-set, wide, blue eyes.

"That is our schooner out there," Mr. Hampton continued, indicating the boat to which Bob earlier had drawn attention. "Mr. Farnum," he added,

"has stated casually around Nome that he is taking a party of hunters up the MacKenzie. We'll get away at once, as nothing is to be gained by a stay in Nome and as, furthermore, we wish to avoid inquiries into our aims. The story Farnum has told will do well enough."

Farnum nodded.

"Just a white lie," he said, grinning. "No use letting the curious know all your secrets."

Then followed an hour of brisk work, at the end of which period the luggage was safely stowed aboard the gasoline schooner, and its screw began to turn. As the little vessel began to throb and draw away from Nome, the boys leaned overside and watched the prospect dwindle in the distance until the houses seemed like toys and the mountainside like a painted backdrop in the theater.

"Hurray," cried Bob, at last, "we're off for the Great Unknown."

"Yes," agreed Frank, "I really feel that way, too. All the way up from Seattle, I felt as if I were nothing more than a tourist, traveling a beaten route. But this, well, this is different."

After that they were silent a long time, while the schooner shook and throbbed and steadily pushed its way up the coast, each boy busy with his thoughts. Yet those thoughts were much the same.

Following that eventful discussion in Seattle, on

their return from South America and their adventures there in The Enchanted City of the Incas, they had gone back to Yale and studied hard to make up for lost time in the first half of the term. All three were clever and had the knack of concentrating at their tasks, and all as a consequence had succeeded in making up back work in classroom and lecture. As a result they had entered the succeeding term, or at least were prepared to do so, without conditions. This was a matter for congratulation, indeed, and deserving of especial reward.

That reward had been theirs. For Mr. Hampton and Mr. Temple both decided that their respective sons and Frank, Mr. Temple's ward, should be permitted to accompany Mr. Hampton on his trip to attempt to find some trace of the "Lost Expedition" and of the reputed oil field in search of which Thorwaldsson had set out.

"Farnum is reputed a wizard in knowledge of the Northland," Mr. Hampton had explained to Mr. Temple, "and, as a consequence, I do not consider that we will run any danger. Our greatest danger, of course, would be to become trapped in the Far North in the Fall and be prevented by the rigors of Winter from regaining the outside. For I do not intend to spend the Winter there. Instead, I hope to be back in civilization by the early Fall.

"That," he added, "will give us plenty of oppor-

tunity to seek traces of the 'Lost Expedition.' I have been in communication with Farnum. His plan is for us to push up the MacKenzie to one of its tributaries, and then strike eastward. We will leave the gasoline schooner to make its way back to Nome, while we push on overland, lightening our journey on rivers and lakes, in the hope of finding the River of Oil flowing north.

"If we are unsuccessful, when the seasonal warnings of approaching Winter come, we will turn to the southeast and come out in northern Canada.

"The boys are hard and fit, and such a trip will be of inestimable value for them. It will make them self-reliant and teach them to depend upon themselves. Not that they are not in a fair way to be youths of that sort already," he added, smiling. "If you could have seen them in South America, George, it would have done your heart good."

"I know, I know," said Mr. Temple, shaking his head slightly, and smiling. "Several years ago, that time when you were captive in Mexico and they set out to rescue you—"

"Yes, and did," supplied Mr. Hampton.

"And did," agreed Mr. Temple. "Well, they showed the stuff that was in them then. And the very same Summer, when I took them to San Francisco on what I considered was going to be a

little pleasure trip combining a bit of business with sight-seeing, and—"

"And you became involved with the Chinese smugglers, and imprisoned, and ended up by busting up their show—"

"Yes," resumed Mr. Temple, "and ended up by bringing the whole outfit into the hands of Uncle Sam's men. Well, I can tell you, they certainly showed their calibre."

"So, I reckon it will be all right to take them along on this trip," said Mr. Hampton

"I suppose so," agreed Mr. Temple. "But innocent as it looks now, I have my doubts. I have my doubts. Wherever those three boys are found, there you can look for things to move fast. Trouble courts them, it seems to me."

Accordingly, the boys had been told they would be taken on the trip into the Far North. And wildly excited they had gone about their preparations. Jack, the keenest radio enthusiast, was all for packing up radio field equipment of every sort right at home. But his father had dissuaded him, pointing out that Seattle was a large city and there everything necessary in the way of an outfit could be purchased, thus saving the trouble and expense of transporting overland to the Pacific port.

"All right, Dad," Jack had agreed. "But, remember, the selection of the radio equipment is to

be left to the fellows and me. We've had a lot of experience with the value of radio when in a tight place, especially in South America, and we want to put that experience to use and be prepared for every contingency this time."

To this Mr. Hampton readily had agreed, with the result that in Seattle the three boys had revelled in the radio equipment stores, which they found well stocked, as the use of radio had developed greatly on the Pacific.

In consequence, their outfit included radio field equipment of the most powerful, yet most compact, designs. For while Mr. Hampton fully realized the value of having the very best yet he had issued a solemn warning that bulk must be considered.

"We will have to travel as lightly as consistent with safety and the purpose of our expedition," he had said. "So don't pile up anything too heavy or bulky, or it will have to be discarded."

Jack knew well that the distance which can be covered with a radiophone transmitter is only about one-fourth as great as that of a wireless telegraph transmitter having the same input of initial current. Therefore, as a means of sending messages, supposedly for aid, over long distances, the wireless telegraph would be the better, inasmuch as equipment for it would be less bulky to transport than equipment for transmitting the human voice. Never-

theless, he was reluctant to place their sole dependence upon the wireless telegraph.

"You see, Dad," he had pointed out to his father, when the outfit was being assembled, "to reach the outside we shall have to depend upon wireless telegraph. But we will also need the radiophone for this reason: that each one of us ought to have a means of calling the main party in case we become separated through going on scouting or hunting expeditions, or for any reason."

"Well, that sounds sensible," his father had agreed. "Go ahead with your plans, but, remember, hold down the bulk."

The result was that equipment capable of telegraphing five hundred miles was assembled, but also Jack made up five light field sets of radio, one for each of their party and for Farnum, which the user could pack in his clothing and which had a radius up to twenty-five miles. The instrument was Jack's now famous ring radio, worn on the finger, with a setting only one inch by five-eighths of an inch. Formerly an umbrella as aerial had been employed but Jack had done entirely away with that in his improved set.

"Well, fellows," said Jack, at last, as Nome faded entirely from view, "I wonder what lies ahead. I wonder whether Thorwaldsson's expedition was stricken down by a plague, which seems hardly

likely, as in that case surely somebody would have managed to get word to the outside by wireless or airplane, or whether it fell victim to a surprise attack by Indians at night, as I understand from Dad that Farnum believes."

"Is that so," said Frank, in surprise. "That's the first I heard of that."

"Yes," said Jack. "Dad told me of it when we were coming aboard this schooner. He said it was the first intimation Farnum had given him that such might be the case, and also his first intimation that there were hostile Indians in this country into which we are going. If it weren't too late, he told me, he would have turned back rather than imperil us, as it is, we shall go pretty warily and try to steer clear of the hostile Indian country."

"Whew," said Bob, "this sounds interesting, hey, what?"

His eyes began to shine.

"Old Bob. Always ready for a fight," said Frank. "Well, let's give him one."

And incontinently, he and Jack fell upon the big fellow and a tussle followed that ended only when they almost fell overboard.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE WILDERNESS.

"WELL, boys, tomorrow we leave the schooner."

It was Tom Farnum who made the announcement over dinner which was eaten on deck. The boat was anchored offshore, far up the Hare Indian River, one of the great tributaries of the MacKenzie. How long it was since they had left Nome none could tell, for in that land of perpetual daylight it was hard to keep track of time.

"Tomorrow," said big Bob, "when is tomorrow?"

He looked at the sun which was still high, despite the lateness of the hour, and would make only an ineffectual attempt to dip below the horizon at midnight, before resuming its upward climb.

Everybody laughed.

"What a topsy turvy land," said Jack. "Well, I, for one, will be glad to go ashore and stretch my legs. Wonderful as the trip has been so far, I'm eager to get started."

"Same here," agreed Frank.

Little of moment had occurred to interrupt the monotony of the trip up the coast and along the northern edge of Alaska and the North American continent to the mouth of the MacKenzie. Of course, occasional ice floes had been encountered and the little schooner had been compelled to make wide detours. But that was to be expected in that Far Northern latitude.

In fact, when they had arrived at the mouth of the MacKenzie, the ice was only recently dissipated from the great river. There, at a dock where a little sidewheel steamer that plied on the MacKenzie in Summer was tied up for repairs, they had replenished their stock of gasoline and then continued the ascent, passing between willowed banks, where huddled occasional trading posts surrounded by native villages, with the snow-capped mountain peaks always in the distance.

Then they had reached the mouth of the Hare Indian River and soon had put beyond them all appearance of the presence of man.

"This is the way Thorwaldsson's party expected to go," Farnum had said. "For it was this route which Farrell and Cameron, the two prospectors, followed on their way in. They were prospecting for gold, you know, had no idea of finding oil. It was their original intention to strike northeast across the numerous streams at the head of the Hare

Indian in search of gold. And Farrell reported, when he reached the outside, that he had found traces and, in fact, several sizable pockets of gold."

Accordingly they pushed on up the Hare Indian a number of days until, in fact, the extra supplies of gasoline which had been taken aboard on leaving the MacKenzie dwindled to the point where it became advisable for the party to go ashore in order that the schooner might turn about and have sufficient fuel to make its way downstream to the supply depot.

It was a period of time that, in fact, however, could hardly be considered in terms of days. So far north had the party come that the sun shone perpetually. It was only at midnight, for a brief space, that it dipped to the horizon.

And what a gorgeous time it had proven to be for all concerned, but especially for the boys. As the powerful little schooner forged ahead, there was not a bend the rounding of which did not afford a surprise. Sometimes it would be caribou or reindeer, probably an escape from some Eskimo herd, which would be surprised standing in the water, and breaking for the timber on the bank at their approach. Again brown bear would be seen on the bank, or beaver swimming strongly across the stream. As for fishing, it was an Izaak Walton paradise. All Bob, Frank and Jack did for hours on end was to

lean overside with hooks baited with bacon rind dangling in the water astern, and pull in speckled beauties. And many a meal was made, too, on wild duck or geese, picked off with a light rifle.

Then came the time when Tom Farnum announced that they would stay ashore on the morrow. And little sleep did the boys have that night, as they lay awake on deck, whispering to each other, an awning shading them from the sun.

Early the next moring they went ashore with their outfit, and then watched the gasoline schooner throb off downstream, around the last bend, and out of sight. As it disappeared, for the first time there came to each of the three boys the feeling of isolation natural to their situation. The last settlement was two hundred miles behind them. They were going into the great unknown, into the regions marked "Unexplored" on the maps of that great northern rim of the North American continent.

True, the weather was fine now and the country green and pleasant about them. But how long would that endure? What if they were beset by oncoming Winter before they could make their way to the outside? What if they were attacked by hostile Indians? What obscure fate had met the Thorwaldsson expedition, traces of which they sought?

Into the mind of each thronged such thoughts, as

they stood in unwonted silence. Then Mr. Hampton called to them.

"No time for day dreaming. Each man to his job."

With him Tom Farnum had brought two trusted men. They hailed from Nome, but were old-timers who had been up and down Alaska for many years. Both were men of forty, sober, steady fellows who would be useful in helping distribute the burden of packs, and would, moreover, be of inestimable value in keeping the party supplied with game as well as in almost any situation that might arise. They were grizzled, weather-beaten men of medium height, both with stout frames, and because of their long existence in the lonesome north little given to talking. Their names were Dick Fairwell and Art Bowman, and they were "Dick" and "Art" to each other and the other members of the party. The boys had taken a liking to both.

Two light canoes had been brought along from Nome, lashed to the deck of the schooner, and in these the seven set out. The boys with Dick occupied one canoe, the other three men with a larger portion of the luggage the other.

When everything was in readiness, following a light breakfast on the bank, the two canoes set out, that containing Farnum, Mr. Hampton and Art taking the lead. About ten miles upstream a rapids

was encountered, and around this the first portage was made. Then once more they took to the water.

Day followed day, in this fashion, as they pushed steadily forward, until almost a week had elapsed. On the fifth day Tom Farnum let out a whoop of joy and headed his canoe for the right bank of the stream at a little gravelly beach. His sharp eye had detected a small cairn of stones on the edge of the brush, and when the others came up with him and stepped from their craft he was busily demolishing the stones comprising the mound.

"A marker," was the only explanation he vouchsafed. "Must have been left by Thorwaldsson. Ah."

At the exclamation he stood upright, holding a small metal box in his hand. The lid was rusted on, and in his impatience, Farnum whipped out a knife and gouged it off while the others crowded around him. Inside was a fold of oilskin, which he ripped open. A folded paper was revealed, which he opened. Then he read aloud the message thereon.

"It's from Thorwaldsson all right. Listen," he said, and read:

" 'Please notify Mr. Otto Anderson, Ashland Block, Seattle, Wash., that I passed here July 2. Party intact with exception of crew sent as he ordered. Farrell says we are on right track.

"THORWALDSSON."

"What does he mean by that reference to the crew?" asked Jack.

"Well," said Farnum, glancing at Mr. Hampton, "as your father knows, that is one of the unexplained and puzzling facts of the situation, that about the ship. You see, a skeleton crew was to be left aboard the ship and it was to winter in the MacKenzie. But of ship or crew, we have found no trace. Search for the ship was prosecuted at the first opportunity this Spring, but it had disappeared. I made a trip up the MacKenzie myself, but the only information I could gather was an occasional rumor at a trading post that a schooner had gone by, on its way out, at night. A ship that might have been the Viking, Thorwaldsson's craft. That was last Fall. Perhaps, the skeleton crew feared to winter in the MacKenzie and started for the outside, and was cought in a storm which it was not sufficiently strong to weather. Only three or four men were to be left aboard. That is the only explanation I could think of."

Mr. Hampton nodded.

"As I said before," he stated, "that seems a reasonable explanation. Three or four men, left alone, might have feared to face the Winter iced in, or might have been stricken ill, and so, for some reason that appeared good enough to them, might have decided to violate orders and start out. As to the

disappearance of the ship, many an undermanned vessel has gone down in a storm, without leaving a trace."

"But, Dad, you've said nothing about this," protested Jack.

Mr. Hampton smiled slightly.

"There are a lot of things which I know I have never told you, Jack," he said. "If I really have neglected to speak of this, however, it has been through an oversight. I've had a lot of things on my mind. But, come. We know this is the way Thorwaldsson passed. We are on the right track. So let us push on. We have still four hours of travel to do before making camp."

CHAPTER IV.

STRIKING GOLD.

LIFE flowed along very pleasantly indeed, for the boys, during the weeks that followed. They were so far north that the sun shone constantly, and never a cloud came to trouble the sky, never a storm to drive them to take shelter. When they camped it was usually in the dim cool recesses of a forest of firs, beneath the dense shade of which could be found the only semblance of night.

Never before had they known the delights of camp life, as they were now living it. It was like being on one continuous picnic. For a considerable period of time they found themselves in a mesh or network of streams and lakes, through which Tom Farnum guided then steadily northeastward, with never a sign of doubt as to the course to take.

They wondered about this, asked why they took certain forks of river or stream, why avoided others. Tom answered readily enough. From Mr. Anderson he had received a minute report containing every

scrap of data Farrell had been able to furnish as to the course taken by him and Cameron on going into the wild country.

"So you see," he added, "while I may not be following in the exact footsteps of Thorwaldsson, yet I am going over the same general route. Sooner or later we will cover the same ground which he covered again, and then I expect we shall find some other record which he has left behind, just as in the case of that note on the Hare Indian."

This was enough for the boys. It satisfied their curiosity. They dismissed, or practically so, from their minds all worry as to the "Lost Expedition." They were too busy enjoying life as they found it each waiting moment.

Around each bend in a stream that their paddles took them, on the shore of each deep, silent lake, was some new marvel. Now it would be a bear grunting on the bank. Again, a deer, probably a runaway from some Eskimo herd on Summer pasture as Farnum explained, standing in the stream, and starting with a snort into the timber at their approach. Occasionally a gray wolf could be seen loping in the distance. Now and again a beaver cut across stream.

With their light rifles the boys occasionally were permitted to pick off some game, usually wild ducks or geese, of which there were numbers along the

watercourses. But nothing was shot wantonly. Many a time, youthful fingers itched on the trigger, only to be restrained by the thought of the cruel uselessness of shooting merely for sport.

Of other inhabitants in this vast northern wilderness, none were encountered. And at this the boys marvelled. It was as if they had the world to themselves. They could not understand it. To them it was a paradise.

"Wait till you see this in Winter," said Farnum grimly. "Or rather, pray that you never do. It is a land of perpetual night, and the temperature is so low that when you stop moving you must have a fire or you will freeze to death. And it isn't every day that you can travel. For this isn't a land of tame Winter as you boys know it. Out of the north comes storms succeeding storm, pittiless in severity. Even the creatures of the wild cannot stand it, in many cases, and drift to the south."

"But how about the Eskimo?" asked Jack. "This is their country, isn't it? How do they stand it?"

"Sometimes they don't," said Farnum. "When the hunting is poor and famine stalks through the Eskimo village, only the hardiest survive."

"Where do they live, anyway?" struck in Frank. "Why aren't they around here? Why havn't we seen any?"

"They may have seen us," said Farnum, "and are

avoiding us. They are a timorous people, know the white man only by tradition. To the Eskimo, the white man is a sort of god, at least to the Eskimo of all this country north of us. Back along the coast of Alaska, of course, some sort of contact has been made. But these Eskimo never come in touch with the whites. They are a migratory people. In Summer they range far and wide on the hunt. In the Winter, they retire to the edge of the Arctic Ocean."

"But why?" asked Bob, in surprise. "I should think that would be the very place for them to steer away from."

"Oh, no," said Farnum. "You see, all game goes far to the south in Winter, so the Eskimo goes to the ocean because it is the home of the only game left—the seal. He builds his snow house or igloo and camps near the air holes of the seal, spearing them as they come up for air. Occasionally he slays a polar bear, too."

"I confess I know very little about the Eskimo," said Jack. "What are his weapons?"

"Bows and arrows tipped with flint or copper, copper-pointed spears, and wooden knives edged with copper," said Farnum.

"But a bear," cried Bob, incredulously. "How could an Eskimo kill a great polar bear with such weapons?"

"Single-handed, he couldn't," said Farnum. "But

when the bear is hunted, the whole tribe of hunters go together. They attack in a circle. Their spears or harpoons have lines attached. And as these harpoons sink into the body of the bear, the lines pull him this way and that as he charges on his tormenters. Eventually, if the Eskimo are lucky, they have him so surrounded that he cannot move. Then one dashes in and administers the death blow."

"Then necessity forces them to live in tribal groups?" asked Jack.

Farnum nodded.

"In the Summer they often hunt alone, ranging far, for they are great travellers. But in Winter, the hunters are all back with the tribe."

"And the Indians?" asked Frank.

Farnum's face darkened.

"There are not many," he said. "I wish there were less. You may say all you please about the 'noble red man.' But all I ever heard about the Indians of the Far North doesn't predispose me in their favor. They are cutthroats, thieves and liars. Usually they hunt somewhat to the south of us, and make their way in towards the northern Canadian settlements as Winter approaches. Let's hope we encounter none of them."

The boys wondered as they went along whether this were gold-producing country into which they were pushing. They spoke of the matter to Dick,

their canoe mate, at times. Taciturn though he was usually, at every mention of gold his eyes brightened, and he became almost voluble.

"Never been this far north," he said on one occasion, "no white man ever has been in here, reckon. But I'd like to stop at the foot o' some of these rapids and wash a little gravel for luck. I sure would like to."

"Let's do it the next rapids we come to," suggested Frank, with eager interest. "It wouldn't take long, would it?"

"Orders is not to waste time."

"Well, I'll speak to father," said Jack. "I'm sure he'd let us try it just once."

In this surmise he was correct, for the noon halt happened to be at the foot of a rapids that would necessitate a portage, and Dick and Art reported the gravelled bank showed signs of "color." Even Farnum, his mind concentrated on the task of getting his party along and on the job in hand, showed interest when addressed on the subject. With pick and pan, therefore, the two men got busy, while the boys watched with breathless interest the process of rocking the pan and washing out the gravel.

"Whoopee," cried Dick, suddenly. "Thar she is. Color in the pan."

"Sure as I'm born," ejaculated his partner. "Strong, too."

All the boys could discern, however, were some dully gleaming particles at the bottom of the pan, out of which most of the gravel had been washed with the water. They had half expected to spy nuggets. Farnum and Mr. Hampton, however, were as eagerly interested as the two old-timers.

"Try another pan, men," suggested Mr. Hampton. "Let us go a little farther upstream."

Once more the process was repeated. This time the pan was rich in "pay" and the excitement of the four older men mounted, hectic spots glowing dull beneath their tan in the cheeks of the two old-timers especially.

Then Dick, who was wielding the pick, attacked a clump of rocks in the edge of the stream at the very foot of the rapids, standing in his boots almost knee-deep in the water. For several minutes he picked and pried and finally, with a shout of delight, turned to his audience behind him on the bank and, having plunged an arm into the water, held it up dripping.

"Look," was all he said.

They gazed, all eyes.

"Well! Well!" cried Art.

A small but sizable nuggett lay on Dick's outstretched palm.

"What luck," cried Jack. "You certainly looked in the right place."

"Bet there's more gold around here," cried Frank. "Maybe a bonanza. Who knows?"

"You ought to stake a claim, Dick," said big Bob. "I don't know much about the process. But that's the thing to do, isn't it?"

"Huh," said Dick, generously. "Belongs to you boys well as me. You thought of it."

"Oughter work it," spoke up Art. "Might take out a good poke this Summer."

This remark recalled Tom Farnum to the object of his expedition.

"No, no, men," he said, sharply. "Don't get bitten with the gold fever now. We've got work ahead of us, work that we contracted to do."

"Right," said Dick.

Art's face fell, but he, too, nodded agreement.

"Just the same," said Farnum, softening, "there's nothing to prevent you two from staking a claim. Some day you may come back to work it."

"Belongs to us no more'n the rest o' you," said Dick, sturdily. "The young fellers wanted us to make a try at it here just for luck, an' we did."

A warm debate followed, the boys protesting they were not entitled to any part in the find. Finally Dick capitulated.

"Tell you what," he said. "Art an' me'll stake

this claim an' file on it. But if we ever come back to work her an' she pays, we'll declare you in."

"Not unless you let us help to finance the expedition," said Jack, turning for confirmation to his comrades. "Isn't that right, fellows."

Bob and Frank agreed. Farnum put an end to the discussion.

"Good enough," he said. "Let it go at that. Now we must buckle into the job. Do you realize we've spent more than two hours here, when we should have stopped only a half hour? We've got to make this portage and push on. Come on. Everybody to his task."

CHAPTER V.

A SURPRISE THROUGH THE AIR

Joyously though time flew by for the boys, with Mr. Hampton and Tom Farnum it was a different matter. They were worried, that became increasingly plain. Finally, although Mr. Hampton purposely refrained from saying anything to disturb the boys, Jack took note of his father's perturbation and questioned him about it.

"Well, Jack," said his father, "we've been weeks on the trail. We can't proceed much farther, without being compelled to start out. And yet so far we have discovered no further trace of Thorwaldsson's party. When we entered the MacKenzie, which flows north, we were going to the south. Going up the Hare Indian we struck east. Since getting into the streams, rivers and lakes we have been going east. Shortly we shall strike the Coppermine. Beyond that lies the river of oil, as reported by Farrell.

"So far we have made good time. With luck, we

shall be able to reach that territory before having to turn back or, rather, for we shall not retrace our steps, turn south. And we should have struck some other trace of Thorwaldsson's party long ere this, if we are on the right track. However, you boys need not worry about this, so let's talk of something else."

Seeing that his father had sunk into one of his rare periods when he wished to be alone with his meditations and did not welcome intrusion even from Jack, the latter moved away to join his comrades.

"Dad's plainly worried," he said. And he ex-explained the circumstances. "Wish I could find some way to make him forget his troubles," he said.

"I know what," said Frank. "He loves music. We're camping for the night. Although"—with a look at the sun—"there isn't much night, is there? Well, anyhow, it's nighttime in Edmonton, where that new broadcasting station was set up last Spring. Let's rig up our radio and see if we can't pick up their concert, just for luck. What do you say?"

"I say, good," declared Jack.

"Edmonton's long way off," objected Bob.

"That's nothing," said Jack. "I believe we can pick it up all right."

"In this northern country we have no static problem, anyway," said Frank. "We couldn't send to Edmonton with our equipment, but I'll bet we can catch."

While Farnum and Mr. Hampton put their heads together in low-whispered conversation, poring over a map, and while Art and Dick lay outstretched under some fir trees, already disposed for sleep, the three boys quietly got out the necessary equipment from among the luggage and set to work.

"A short distance up the stream," said Frank, "I saw two firs taller than most, standing alone. They're a pretty good distance apart, too. We can climb up those trees and string the aerial between them."

They made their way to the trees noted by Frank, and found them exactly suited to the purpose. Jack and Frank, were lighter than Bob, took turns climbing the trees, and the wires were strung without any great difficulty. They worked busily, and when everything was all connected up, Bob looked at his watch.

"Allowing for the difference in time," he said, "they're about ready to begin their concert. On what meter wave length does the Edmonton station send, Frank?"

"I don't recall. About three hundred and fifty, I suppose. We'll tune up and try, anyway."

"What dubs we are, fellows, not to have thought of this before," said Jack.

"Oh, well," said Bob, "broadcast concerts never did interest me much, anyway. I like to do the send-

ing myself, we've always been dog-tired when we made camp at night, and ready to turn in as quickly as Art and Dick. If it hadn't been for your thought of bringing some relaxation and amusement to your father tonight, Jack, we'd have been asleep already."

"I guess that's right, old thing," Jack replied. "You would have been asleep, anyway, even if the rest of us kept tossing. But what does she say, Frank? Any luck yet?"

Frank, who had been manipulating the controls, looked up mirthfully.

"What do you think of your musical program, Jack?" he replied. "Listen in a minute will you? "They're sending out a crop and weather report."

Jack's face fell, then he, too, laughed.

"Oh, well," he said, "that's just a preliminary. The concert will follow."

"No," answered Frank, who had resumed his headpiece, "now it's a bulletin report on the day's news events. Listen. Why, great—"

His voice died. Over his face came an expression of surprise.

Jack and Bob sprang to take up the other headpieces attached to the box. Over their features also spread amazement and even consternation. They listened intently. Then all three simultaneously tore off the receivers and looked at each other .

"Whew, what do you know about that?" said Bob, in an awed tone.

"And on the very night that we decided to set up the radio, too," said Frank.

"It seems like the hand of fate," declared Jack. "Say, we must get father and Tom Farnum."

"Thorwaldsson's airship found wrecked on land near the mouth of the MacKenzie," said Bob. "And the skeleton of the aviator. Can you beat it?" he ejaculated again.

"Hey, Jack, wait a minute," cried Frank, running after his companion, who already had started for camp. "Discovered by Indians who were bringing out furs, did you get that?"

Jack nodded, but saved his breath as he continued to run. Frank fell in beside him, Bob pounding at his heels.

In a few moments they burst excitedly upon the gravelled beach by the river, where camp had been made for the night. Dick and Art lay outstretched in slumber under the nearest fir trees. Mr. Hampton and Farnum were still deep in their discussion, and apparently had not even been aware of the absence of the boys, for they looked up in surprise as the latter approached.

"What is it, Jack? What's the matter?" demanded Mr. Hampton, rising to his feet in alarm, as he noted his son's excitement.

Quickly, Jack related what had occurred, describing their setting up of the radio, their picking-up of the Edmonton station's nightly program, and their discovery that Thorwaldsson's airship had been found far behind them near the mouth of the MacKenzie.

"It was only a bulletin news report, Dad," Jack explained, "yet I suppose it contains all the facts. Evidently the discovery of the airship had been made weeks ago by Indians, going to the mouth of the MacKenzie with their Winter catch of furs. But, of course, it took a long time for the news to reach civilization. It was just made public today. The very day, too, that we decided to rig up the radio. It certainly seems like the hand of fate, doesn't it, Dad? If we had waited until tomorrow, or set up the radio yesterday, probably we would not have known of this discovery."

Mr. Hampton nodded, but absently. Already his mind was busy with the problem.

"Did the report state any message or papers of any sort were found on the body of the aviator?"

"No. Only that the body had been there a long time, as nothing but the skeleton remained."

"And that was all?"

"That was all the definite information," said Frank. "Of course, there was a word or two of speculation as to what had occurred. The theory

was advanced that the aviator was flying to summon aid for Thorwaldsson, who was in some predicament, but that some accident occurred to his engine while flying, and he fell to his death."

"A plausible enough theory," said Farnum. "But, in that case, I can't understand why the aviator did not bear some message from Thorwaldsson. Can you, Mr. Hampton?"

Mr. Hampton shook his head.

"That's not the only puzzling thing," he said. "The disappearance from the MacKenzie of Thorwaldsson's ship, the death of the aviator, the lack of message on his body, the swallowing up of Thorwaldsson and his party, Thorwaldsson's failure to send any radio messages—all these need explaining.

"We must face the fact," he continued, "that some disaster of a totally unexpected nature has befallen Thorwaldsson's expedition. And I mean by that a disaster of man's agency. They were prepared for practically all eventualities in their grapple with nature. Although the Winter was severe, yet they were well provisioned, had Farrell who knew the country, and were prepared in every way for a lengthy stay. Even if worst came to worst, and Winter proved too much for them, some would have survived and brought out word of what had befallen."

"Then you think, Dad—"

Jack regarded his father, wide-eyed.

"I think, Jack," said the latter firmly, "that it is time to take you boys into our complete confidence. Farnum and I have been talking this matter over. We feel pretty certain that some powerful man or group of men has knowledge of Farrell's discovery of the river of oil, and is working against us. How to explain the obtaining of that knowledge I do not know, But, perhaps, some traitor in Anderson's employ, somebody high in his confidence, got some word of it. Perhaps, Thorwaldsson in an unguarded moment, let some bit of information fall. Oil, you know, is a vital necessity of the world. Discovery of a vast new field would make great fortunes.

"Whoever heard of it, heard of Farrell's discovery, would realize that the only way to come upon it would be to follow the Thorwaldsson expedition, dog its steps and, at the psychological moment, strike. In other words, when the field was rediscovered by Farrell, wipe out the Thorwaldsson expedition, and claim possession.

"Events, as they have occurred, seem to fit in with this theory. The disappearance of Thorwaldsson's ship from the MacKenzie. Apparently it traveled only at night, thus slipping by the scattered trading posts on the great river. It has never been heard of since. It might very easily have been scuttled and sunk, or else materially changed in appearance in

some little bay on that far northern coast of the Arctic. That would mean that the crew was bought up, but that is not an impossibility, for men I am sorry to say break faith for gain. As to the airship, the aviator whom I know of as a man true and tried, may have sought to make his escape to the outside when Thorwaldsson was captured—as I believe likely—and may have paid with his life for his devotion, through some unforseen accident to his machine."

The boys stood stunned. Finally Jack broke silence.

"But, Dad, how terrible," he said in a shocked tone. "To think of men being so unscrupulous."

"Not all men, Jack," said his father. "Remember that."

"Mr. Hampton," said Frank. "What do you intend to do?"

"Frankly, I don't know," said the latter. "Now that we are within striking distance of our objective—the river of oil—I do not want to give up. If it lies where we believe it to lie, we can reach it before necessity compels us to flee south to escape oncoming Winter. That will mean that we can map the route for future operation. I had at one time, too, although I did not mention it to you boys, some hope that we would be able to follow the river out into the Arctic and discover a route of approach by

water. But we may not have time for that. However, once we do locate the river by land approach, we will have a pretty accurate idea of whether it can be reached by ship through the Arctic Ocean in Summer.

"But whether to push on and imperil you lads, and the rest of us, in the light of what we suspect lies ahead, I do not know. We shall have to sleep over it."

After some further conversation, all returned to where the boys had rigged up the radio. Dick and Art were childishly delighted at the concert, the first in their experience. Farnum was almost equally stirred. As to Mr. Hampton, for the time he forgot his worries in enjoyment of the music. As showmen, the boys were in the element.

More than an hour passed, and the concert was still in progress, when Frank, who had been absent unnoted suddenly approached from the thick forest of firs on the bend, below which lay their camp, with a face so pale that Jack, who first caught sight of him, became alarmed.

"What is it, Frank?" he asked, seizing his comrade by an arm.

For a moment Frank was speechless. He swallowed convulsively, but was unable to make a reply. The others looked at him in astonishment,

and all tore the headpieces off and neglected the closing number of the concert, as they stared at him.

With outstretched arm, Frank pointed towards the point of land, making a bend in the stream, beyond which lay their camp.

CHAPTER VI.

INDIANS!

"INDIANS."

That was all Frank said, but it was sufficient. Over the faces of Mr. Hampton, Farnum and the two men, Dick and Art, came looks of alarm.

"In camp," asked Jack, a sudden thought striking him. "Maybe they're just visitors."

But Farnum shook his head decisively, before Frank could reply.

"The only Indians in this country hate the white man," he said. "They have had some cause, goodness knows. But the point is, they hate us." Turning abruptly to Frank, he said:

"Do they know where we are? Were you seen?"

"I was approaching our camp from this side," said Frank, who had recovered his speech. "I was in search of a handkerchief, for I've got a little cold, and found I did not have one with me. Anyway, my feet made no sound on the pine needles, and I was screened from the camp by the trees. Suddenly,

as I neared the last fringe, I saw a dozen Indians or more steal out of the trees on the other side of the clearing. They fell upon our belongings and started going through them. I hurried away to warn you."

"Quick," said Farnum, "there is no time to lose. We are seven and all armed. They saw us depart and probably thought this was a grand chance to rifle our camp. Waited a while to see if we were coming back at once. I imagine they are just thieves. Well, we'll give them a lesson. Come on."

Mr. Hampton laid a detaining hand on Farnum's arm.

"Even if they are thieves," he said. "We want no bloodshed. Shoot over their heads, if shooting is necessary."

Farnum's face fell.

"All right, sir," he said. "Just as you say. But we'll have to hurry, or they'll get away with everything and escape in our canoes. Then we would be out of luck, indeed."

With beating hearts, the party stole back through the trees, spread out with intervals of several yards between each. Dick and Art, who never stirred anywhere without their rifles with them, being old-timers who knew what it meant to be separated from their weapons in this wild land, were on the ends of the line. The boys had left their rifles be-

hind, as had Mr. Hampton. Farnum, however, had brought his, and held the middle position. The other four were armed with their revolvers.

As they neared the fringe of trees forming the last rampart between them and camp, crouching behind tree trunks as they stole forward, they could see a group of Indians still busy over their disordered luggage, which had been opened and tossed about near the fire. Another group was at the water's edge, loading the canoes which had been drawn up on the sand.

"Just in time," thought Jack.

Then his eye was caught by a picturesque figure of a man emerging from the little tent which Mr. Hampton employed, because he was a sufferer from rheumatism and wanted some shelter to keep off night chills in case they were late in getting out of the country, but which at present frequently was not set up on their halts. The present occasion, however, a whim to sleep under canvas rather than the fir trees had possessed him, and the tent had been set up.

The man who caught Jack's attention differed little in dress from Dick and Art, but about his head was bound a red bandanna handkerchief in piratical fashion, and this suggestion was increased by his long, drooping black mustaches. Jack could see him clearly, and thought that seldom had he

looked upon a more villainous countenance. The fellow held a piece of paper in his hand, and was reading it with evident satisfaction.

A low exclamation from Farnum, next in line on his left, drew Jack's attention. He looked at the latter, crouching behind a tree. Farnum's eyes were ablaze. He had raised his rifle and was pointing it at the man before the tent. The next moment there was a report, the paper fell from the fellow's hand, and he emitted a howl of surprise and pain.

"Just the hand," Jack overheard Farnum say in a tone of vexation, as he prepared to fire again. But the other, seizing his wounded hand in the unwounded one, did not wait for the attack. Running low and in zigzag fashion, he darted for the cover of the trees on the other side of the camp, at the same time shouting an unintelligible warning to his companions.

"Fire," shrieked Farnum, pumping another shot after the fleeing man, that kicked up the dirt at his heels. "That's Lupo the Wolf. Shoot to kill."

Jack shot with the rest, but remembering his father's exhortation fired high. The volley was general. From the rifles of Art, Dick and Farnum came deeper notes of heavy weapons, while from the four revolvers of the others poured a succession of shots. It sounded as if an army were opening fire from the woods.

The Indians did not stay upon the order of their going. Those grouped about the luggage ran after the disappearing man Farnum had called Lupo the Wolf, while the other group at the canoes dashed away along the gravelled bank of the stream. One, however, sought to launch the canoes into the swift current before departing, but his first effort was ineffectual, and any further attempt was stopped by a bullet from Mr. Hampton's revolver, which winged him in an arm and sent him scurrying after his fellows.

"Dick, Art, here," cried Farnum, premptorily.

The two ran to his side.

"That was Lupo the Wolf," Farnum explained rapidly, his voice betraying his excitement. "You can guess what that means?"

The others nodded, with compressed lips.

"I want you to trail them. Don't run into danger, but see if their camp is nearby."

With nods of understanding, the two frontiersmen were off at the run, not crossing the open camp, but circling it amongst the trees. Then Farnum turned to Mr. Hampton, and the boys crowding at his heels.

"That wasn't just an attack from Indian thieves," he said. "Mr. Hampton"—and his voice took on a solemn tone—"that was a blow from the enemy."

"What do you mean?"

"They were desparados under the personal leadership of Lupo the Wolf."

"And he?"

"He is a cross-breed, half Indian, half white, and the most notorious bad man in the north. He is known not only throughout the length and breadth of Alaska, but throughout the Yukon of Canada, too. From Ketchikan to Arctic City, and from Nome to Dawson, he has gambled, fought, knifed, murdered, and never been brought to book. Ah, you consider Alaska is law-abiding these days. To a certain extent, the towns and mining camps have grown more orderly and there are sheriffs 'north of 54.' But might still rules in the camps."

Farnum spoke bitterly, and leaned a moment on his rifle. As it was evident, however, that he had not yet finished, the others did not interrupt. Presently he resumed.

"Lupo recruits his men from the fisheries. Men of the lowest type come there in Summer, in droves, lured by the high wages. They form temporary alliances with the native women. Then in the Fall, they depart. You can guess what the children of such lawless unions are like. They are cross-breeds, inheriting the most vicious and lawless characteristics of the human race. It is from them Lupo recruits his following."

"But why should they be away over here, in this

unpeopled wilderness?" asked Mr. Hampton. "Unless—" He paused and looked questioningly at Farnum.

The latter nodded.

That's it," he said. "Why? Unless, if you will let me finish for you, Lupo is on our trail. And that I believe to be the case. When Frank here first came with word of Indians in camp, I considered them merely raiders from some passing body of hunters. But when I found Lupo at their head, I knew better. The wonder to me is," he said, growing thoughtful, "that he did not send men to trail us and kill us or take us prisoner."

Mr. Hampton shrugged.

"Even the cunningest slip up now and then," he said. "Perhaps his men wanted to loot first. And, anyway, they had only been here a few moments when, thanks to Frank, we were able to surprise them. Well, thanks to our good angel, we came off as well as we did. Nothing stolen, our canoes still here, nobody hurt."

"Ah," said Farnum, darkly, "we're not out of the woods yet. If Lupo the Wolf is after us, well—there is trouble ahead."

CHAPTER VII.

A MAN OF THE "MOUNTED."

WHILE Mr. Hampton and Farnum turned in to take inventory to discover what, if anything, had been stolen, the boys went back to take down and pack their radio outfit. As it lay in the opposite direction from that taken by the Indians who, moreover, were being tracked by Dick and Art and could not double back without warning being given, it was considered safe for the boys.

When they returned to camp, they found the two frontiersmen ahead of them. These reported the Indian camp pitched some two miles in their rear and that, upon arrival, Lupo and his men had packed up and taken canoe on the back track.

"Now what does that mean?" asked Farnum, thoughtfully. "It is probable that Lupo has been behind us all the way, if what I suspect is true, namely that they have been trailing us. But why should they be fleeing now?"

"They can't have been close to us all the time,

Mr. Farnum," said Bob, "or why weren't we attacked before?"

Farnum nodded.

"That's true enough," he said. "It may be that Lupo started late and has been all this time catching up with us."

Breaking a thoughtful silence, Mr. Hampton said:

"As a matter of fact, that seems the most probable explanation. The other side, Farnum, probably has a spy at Nome, of whom you are unaware. But the spy knows your identity. Your story of taking us into the wilderness to hunt may have deceived this spy. But then, later, word would reach him from Seattle of my identity. Not that it is commonly known. But if some traitor close to Anderson is trading on Farrell's secret, my connection with Anderson would be suspected, especially as several years ago I worked with the Anderson oil crowd in New Mexico. So words would reach Nome to watch me. Then someone would start out on our trail."

"And that someone was Lupo," said Farnum. "A fine cutthroat."

An earnest discussion followed. What did this turning back of Lupo the Wolf mean? Did he intend to stick to their trail, but at a greater distance in the rear? Or did he plan to encircle them and

lie in ambush ahead? That his retreat was other than momentary, and meant he intended giving up their pursuit, nobody believed.

"Look here, Dad," said Jack, during the course of this discussion, "don't you consider it quite likely that Lupo intends to take us by surprise and attack us, rather than to retreat?"

Mr. Hampton nodded.

"I do, indeed, Jack," he said. "A cutthroat such as Lupo would have brought his band of desperadoes here for only one purpose, and that is, to dispose of us. We were lucky this time by reason of the fact that they came upon our camp first, and stopped to loot. But from now on we shall have to be continually on our guard."

"It's a good thing, Mr. Hampton, that this is the long Summer, when daylight never fails," said Frank. "That makes it easier to guard against a surprise attack."

"Yes," Mr. Hampton agreed, "that makes it easier. But from now on, we shall have to be on the watch continually."

He was silent a moment, thinking. Then he turned to the other members of the party, Farnum, Dick and Art being gathered about him as well as the boys, preparatory to the launching of the canoes, which were ready loaded.

"Are we making a mistake in letting these fellows

out of sight?" he asked. "Would it be better to set Dick and Art to watch them, and appoint a rendezvous where we can come together later?"

The two Alaskans were silent. Their faces, however, showed approval of the plan. Farnum struck his forehead with clenched fist in a characteristc gesture.

"Just what I would have proposed myself, if I had been awake," he confessed. "Dick, Art, do you think you could pick up their trail?"

The two nodded.

"They won't back track far," said Dick. "Art an' me can follow 'em afoot. That last portage is only four miles back, an' we can catch up with 'em there. Now about where to meet up with you again?"

"None of us know this country," said Farnum, "and so it will be difficulty to appoint a rendezvous. But, look here. Lupo undoubtedly intends to continue our pursuit, and won't let our trail go cold. Consequently, you will be near us. I think the best plan will be to report to us at every camp. One of you can keep watch on Lupo while the other brings in a report."

"Good enough," said Dick, the more loquacious of the pair. "Look for us at tomorow's camp."

Supplied with bacon and a little flour sufficient for a meal or two, guns at the trail, the pair struck

swiftly on the back trail, disappeared among the trees at the bend and were gone from sight.

"All right, boys," said Farnum. "Let's get going. Can you manage your canoe all right by yourselves?"

Mr. Hampton laughed.

"I think they can scrape along, Farnum," he said. "Probably we'll be asking one of them to help us before long. Well, come on."

Paddles dipped into the stream once more, the canoes shot away, and, with Farnum leading to set the course, the boys fell in behind. In the leading canoe, as the two men settled down to the stroke a low-voiced conversation began that lasted a long time. What Mr. Hampton and Farnum were saying could not be heard, for the gap between the two canoes, though not great, was considerable. Moreover, they spoke in low tones. But the boys sensed an undercurrent of anxiety felt by both the older men. As for themselves, however, they were not worried. On the contrary, the excitement of finding themselves trailed had brightened them wonderfully.

"Old expedition was getting too monotonous, anyway," said Bob presently.

"Oh, I suppose you'll want to challenge the best Indian wrestler now, won't you?" said Jack, in a tone of mock seriousness.

"Yes, Bob, why didn't you go back with Dick and Art and send in your challenge?" asked Frank, in the same jollying manner. "You know you haven't been in a match with anybody for some time. Here was your chance, and you went and let it slip away from you. But, don't worry, perhaps the Indians will return. Who knows? You may even have a chance to exchange courtesies with no less a personage than Lupo the Wolf himself."

The big fellow grinned, but made no reply. And so the two canoes swept on between the low banks of the stream, one weighted with anxiety, the other filled with light-heartedness. The boys were not simpletons. They realized, indeed, that they were in a precarious situation. They were deep in the far northern wilderness. An enemy of superior numbers dogged their heels. In all that vast country, was none to whom they could look for help. But, for all that, they saw no occasion to worry. It was not the first time in which they found themselves in a ticklish situation. They had come unscathed out of other perils, even winning some honor in the encounter. They would do the same again. Thus they put the matter to themselves.

Hour after hour passed, during which period they twice encountered slight rapids, up which they waded with the canoes instead of portaging. All were tiring rapidly, for not only was their number

reduced by the absence of Dick and Art, and the work made correspondingly heavy, but in addition they were traveling now on reserve strength, as prior to making the last camp they already had done a big day's work.

Farnum, however, pushed ahead until at the end of four hours of travel they came to the shore of a small lake. Here, in a secluded cove, convenient to the stream on which they had been traveling, they were about to make camp, when Frank approached Mr. Hampton and Farnum and indicated an island a half mile away.

"Isn't that smoke over there?" he asked, pointing.

Farnum stared, and in a moment his keen eyes confirmed Frank's observation. Mr. Hampton put up the field glasses which he always carried strapped to him, and also saw the smoke. But he saw something more—a skin kyak drawn up on the shore of the island.

"Hard to tell from that what sort of man is camping out there," said Farnum, when informed of the kyak. "Everybody uses 'em in this country—Indian, Eskimo, and the occasional prospector. That smoke doesn't indicate a big fire. Must be only one man, or maybe, two. Let's investigate. If we decide to make camp out there, well, that island would be a good place and it would be hard to surprise us there if we kept guard."

Once more, paddles were plied, and the two canoes cut diagonally across the waters of the lake towards the island. As they approached, Farnum raised his voice in a hail. A moment later an answering shout came back. Then a figure stepped from the trees to the little stretch of sand upon which the kyak was drawn up and stood, watching their approach, hand shading eyes against the glare of the sun, head bare.

"Great Godfrey's ghost," exclaimed Farnum in a low voice, turning his head slightly to address Mr. Hampton, "it's a policeman."

"What?"

"A member of the Northwest—of the Canadian Mounted Police."

"What's he doing here?"

"I don't know. But we'll soon find out."

"Welcome, strangers," said the other, a tall bronzed man, as they approached. "Just in time for a snack."

He advanced to the water's edge, and stood ready to help. Farnum's appraising eye took in the approach. Shoal water and a sandy beach! He decided to drive the canoe up on the sands. Shipping his paddle, he leaped from the bow into the water, as the forefoot of the canoe grated lightly. Relieved of his weight, the canoe rose at the bow and sank at the stern under Mr. Hampton. Seizing the bow,

Farnum ran it up on the beach, the uniformed man lending a hand. A moment later, Jack, who was in the bow of the boy's canoe, repeated the manoeuvre. The two craft were drawn up side by side.

"MacDonald's my name," said the Canadian simply.

"Know Arkell of Dawson?" asked Farnum.

"Know him well," said the other. "One o' the best on the Force."

"Friend of mine," said Farnum.

The two clasped hands warmly. Then Farnum introduced Mr. Hampton and the boys. MacDonald led the way to a sheltered spot among the trees, where a fire burned.

"Just about to broil some fish," he said. "Lucky there's plenty. I'm crazy about fishing," he continued, "and when they bit here I pulled out mor'n I could use. Was wonderin' what to do with 'em when I heard your hail. Guess I don't need to worry about that any longer."

As he spoke he busied himself about preparations for dinner, and soon an appetizing odor of frying fish rose to assail the twitching nostrils of the hungry boys.

"Suppose I get another pan and help, sir," proffered Bob.

His comrades laughed, for the big fellow's appetite was proverbial among them. MacDonald nod-

ded with a grin of understanding. Bob tore back to the canoes, and soon returned with a pan in hand. In a short time the fish were fried, and all hands fell to right heartily.

"Long way off your beat, aren't you?" asked Farnum, of MacDonald, as they ate.

The other nodded. Then he regarded them sharply.

"Same to you," he said. First white men I've seen in many days."

Mr. Hampton read a challenge in the straight blue eyes under the grizzled brows, and met it promptly.

"Yes, and I'll tell you why we are here," he said. "I think our meeting with you was providential. If you have been in this country long, you may have heard something that will help us. At any rate, here's our story."

Whereupon, he proceeded to relate the reason for their presence. He made a clean breast of it, keeping back nothing, telling MacDonald of the alleged oil discovery by Farrell and Cameron, Cameron's death, Farrell's return as guide to Thorwaldsson's expedition, and their presence now in an attempt to trace the missing men.

"So that's that," said MacDonald. "So that's the reason for Thorwaldsson's 'Lost Expedition.' And it was into this country he come! Well, well."

In conclusion, Mr. Hampton told of their recent adventure with Lupo the Wolf. MacDonald manifested keen interest. His hand, as he poured tobacco into a pipe, shook slightly, and he spilled a little of the precious tobacco.

"You ain't heard of it likely," he said. "You wouldn't. But this Lupo killed my partner on the Force, an' I asked the Inspector to let me go after him myself. I followed him in from Dawson an' lost his trail several days ago. Now, well—"

MacDonald averted his face, rose and walked down towards the lake shore, and the others respected his evident desire to be alone and did not follow.

"Out after Lupo single-handed," whispered Frank. "And the desperado surrounded by all his men, too."

Farnum nodded.

"That means nothing to the Mounted," said he.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST BLOOD.

So tired were all members of the party after their unexpected exertions of moving camp and trekking on, coming at the end of a day filled with fatiguing labor, that now a haven had been reached and they had relaxed from their tension, they were ready to go to sleep at once. First, however, preparations had to be made not only to keep guard but to keep watch also for Dick and Art. Although the latter did not know definitely, of course, where they were encamped, yet it would not be difficult for them to follow the trail at least to the shore of the lake.

"Look here," said MacDonald, returning to join the conference, "I'm not near as tired as the rest of you. I'll keep watch for your friends for a couple of hours while the rest of you get some sleep."

"All right," said Farnum, gratefully, "that is, if you promise to wake me at the end of two hours. I can use a little sleep right now."

"Turn in, then," said MacDonald. "These

spruces give you enough shade. And, anyway, I guess you don't need much inducement to go to sleep."

"I could sleep right out in the open sun with my face turned up to the sky," said big Bob, yawning. "Well, nighty night, folks."

Nothing occurred during MacDonald's watch, and at the end of the two-hour period he awakened Farnum, in keeping with the agreement.

"Thought some of letting you sleep on," he said. "But, to tell you the truth, I been travelin' hard myself, and need a little sleep, too."

"Right," said Farnum. "I'd have been peeved if you hadn't waked me."

Several hours later, Farnum keeping lonely vigil among the bushes by the lake shore, descried a canoe shoot out of the mouth of the stream down which they, too, had come and swing into the lake. At first, as only the bow of the canoe appeared, he was startled, believing Lupo's Indians already were on the trail. But a moment later, with relief and yet surprise to see them there, he made out the two figures in the boat as those of Dick and Art.

The pair rested on their paddles a moment, scanning the shore and also, Farnum noted, apparently casting anxious glances behind them. He was too far away, however, to see whether that were really the case. Farnum realized that, with

the skin kyak belonging to MacDonald now drawn safely out of sight among the bushes, beside their own canoes, Dick and Art would not have the same indications pointing to the island that had he on arrival. Therefore, he stepped from the bushes and was just about to set his cupped hand to his mouth and call when the unexpected occurred.

Dick and Art already had dipped their paddles into the water again and were making a wide swing with the evident intention of bringing the canoe parallel to the shore but some distance out, when Farnum's startled eyes beheld another canoe arrive at the mouth of the stream behind them.

Action was as quick as thought. Dick and Art evidently had managed to obtain one of Lupo's canoes and were being closely pursued. How closely, moreover, apparently they did not know. He must warn them, not only of his presence and of help close at hand, but also of the danger behind them. The course they were taking would bear them away from the island and, unless changed at once, would make it possible for Lupo to cut them off from their friends.

Although he had left his rifle at camp, as he stumbled out with sleep filling his eyes and dulling his brain, Farnum had his automatic swinging in the holster at his belt. Whipping it out, he shot three times in rapid succession.

At the sound, Dick and Art stared towards the island where Farnum, stepping into the open, was vigorously waving his hat to attract their attention. Lupo's men also set up a shout, as they churned the water racing to cut off their quarry.

"What is it?" cried Frank, first of the aroused camp to gain Farnum's side.

Then his glance took in the situation.

"Look here, those fellows might pick off Art and Dick before they can gain safety, even if they don't succeed in cutting them off," he said. "Let's get our rifles, fellows, and open fire. A long shot, but they're coming closer."

"Anyway, it will make them draw in their horns," said Farnum. "Tell you what, you boys run and get the rifles, and Mr. Hampton and I will launch one of our canoes. We'll go out to help Dick and Art, if those fellows keep closing in on them."

The three boys sped away, nothing loath, but when they returned they found Farnum's plan unnecessary. As the two canoes had swept along, Dick, who was in the stern, suddenly had thrown down his paddle, and taken up his rifle, while Art had swung the canoe about with one dexterous stroke. Dick immediately had opened fire, and Art had followed suit.

The boys heard the shots as they ran down towards the shore. When they reached the sand

they found Lupo's men already had faced about and were hurrying towards the mainland. One of their number evidently was hit.

"Main good shootin' at long range a' so quick after paddlin'," commented MacDonald appreciatively.

Content with having beaten off their enemies, the two desisted, resumed their paddles and soon were within hailing distance. Greetings and congratulations were exchanged, and Dick and Art ran their canoe on shore. As soon as the first hubbub of exclamations died away, Mr. Hampton led the way to the camp. MacDonald put the coffee pot on the fire and between draughts of the strong, hot liquid Dick told their story.

After leaving the previous camp, they had gone back to where they seen Lupo break camp and start on the back trail. The meaning of this move, they had discussed. It seemed to them folly to believe Lupo was relinquishing the chase. They believed he would suspect Mr. Hampton and Farnum would spy on him, and was merely trying to throw them off guard by creating the impression that he was abandoning the chase. Therefore, they had gone warily, convinced that at the end of a short withdrawal Lupo would call a halt and prepare to 'bout face.

This suspicion proved correct. Some two miles

farther on they discerned the four canoes of the half-breed halted alongshore while Lupo harangued their occupants.

"We wanted to listen powerful bad to what he was a-sayin'," explained Dick. "But we couldn't get close enough. There wasn't much cover near 'em and we had to lay hid where the trees was thickest, quite a ways off. Art and I lay there, a-strainin' our ears but without any luck when suddenly somethin' happens. Most of 'em was on shore, listenin' to Lupo but in one canoe was one man a-huntin' around like he'd lost somethin'.

"What it was we never did know. But suddenly, this fellow shoves off with a shout to Lupo. Lupo answers like he was agreein'. So then this fellow comes a-paddlin' down stream like mad. As he goes by where we're a-layin' low, Art whispers to me: 'This is where Lupo turns his gang around. That's sure. Best thing we can do is to beat it back an' warn our crowd. An' my legs is tired. I'd like to let my arms work for me. Let's go.'

"I nods, and without any more words we backed out and started down stream after that canoe. The fellow is goin' like mad, which means he ain't intendin' to go far. He's lost somethin' or other and thinks it may be flotin' on the water or, maybe is layin' on shore where he touched. Anyway, that's what we thought. We never did get to know. For

after we'd made a bend in the stream and put some distance between Lupo and us, we decided it was no use runnin' any farther.

"Here goes," said Art. And he let fly over the Indian's head. That fellow didn't wait for more. He just jumped out of the canoe an' started swimmin' for the other shore. So then Art give me his rifle an' he swims out and brings in the canoe. Last we seen of that Indian he was streaking it back on the other bank. I got in and—well, here we are."

MacDonald, who had listened in silence, suddenly interrupted:

"How many men has Lupo got with him?"

"A dozen."

MacDonald looked at Mr. Hampton.

"You know why I want him," he said. "For murder. And then there's this raid on you. There are eight of us, includin' these husky young fellows of yours. Will you help me capture him an' his gang?"

Mr. Hampton looked thoughtful.

"But, MacDonald, what would you do with them? We can't turn aside from our own object long? We couldn't help you guard them. And you couldn't get twelve or thirteen men back to your Post single-handed, especially if any of them are wounded."

MacDonald's face fell.

"Guess you're right," he said. "But when I think

o' that skunk—murderin' the best pal a man ever had—well, I see red, that's all." His head sank to his clenched hands and he sat on a fallen tree, staring moodily at the ground between his feet.

"Certainly is a problem, Mr. Hampton," said Farnum, slowly. "If we don't do something, Lupo will continue to hang to our trail as we proceed, a constant danger."

"I know," said Mr. Hampton. "Let me think."

He, too, sat silent, staring meditatively at the ground.

The boys had been listening with interest. Now Frank nudged Jack, with whom he was standing by the fire, and whispered in his ear. Jack's face brightened and he nodded.

"I'll bet they have," he whispered. "Ask MacDonald."

Frank turned to the ranger.

"Mr. MacDonald, how far away is your Post?" he inquired.

MacDonald looked up puzzled, but answered readily enough.

"A good four hundred miles to the South."

"Why do you ask, Frank?" Mr. Hampton wanted to know.

"Just a minute, sir, please," begged Frank, once more turning to MacDonald. "And how many men are at the Post?"

"Captain and five men."

"Oh, is that all?"

Frank's tone was one of disappointment. MacDonald smiled slightly.

"People think the 'Mounties' must be as many as an army," he said. "Well, we keep this wilderness clean with a handful. O' course, when necessary, too, we can swear in deputies."

"Have you got wireless at the Post?" asked Frank.

MacDonald nodded.

"Captain equipped us some time back," he said. "All posts or forts, as we call them sometimes, have wireless now."

"Good for you, Frank. I see what you're driving at now," said Mr. Hampton. "You—"

Frank nodded.

"Yes, sir. I thought if we helped Mr. MacDonald capture Lupo and his gang, we could call his Post by wireless and have them send men to help him take his prisoners in."

CHAPTER IX.

A CALL TO THE FORT.

"Now," said Jack, "is the time that I wish I had my 20-kilowatt radio tube that I have been working on so long."

Mr. Hampton, Bob and Frank nodded sympathetically. An enthusiast on radio, Jack had developed a number of new appliances. The latest of these was not yet completed. He had worked on it in the laboratories at Yale during the Winter and Spring. The lateness of his return to his classes, however, inasmuch as he did not arrive at college until after Christmas, due to the delay occasioned by his adventures in South America in search of "The Enchanted City of the Incas," compelled him to devote most his time to catching up in his studies. He did not, therefore, have as much time to devote to laboratory experiments as he desired. As a consequence, the 20-kilowatt tube had not yet been perfected, when time came for him to depart for Alaska with his father.

Jack's 20-kilowatt tube, when completed, would be the most powerful in the world, and he expected, moreover, to construct others of greater kilowattage. A 75-kilowatt tube had been produced in England, it is true, but it had not been found practicable. Jack's tube was to be steel-jacketed and equipped with a water-cooling device, due to the heat produced when in operation. His big dream was that this tube, when used as an amplifier in conjunction with an alternator, would make trans-atlantic telephonic communication as common as cabling or wireless telegraphing.

"If I only had one of my 20-kilowatt tubes now," he mourned, "we would be able to talk not only with Mr. MacDonald's Post but with Dawson or even Nome."

"Well, Jack," said Frank, "it's too bad. Just the same, let's get busy. For, with our 50-watt oscillator tube set we will be able to communicate by telegraph up to 500 miles. And, as the Post is only 400 miles away, we can reach it easily."

For sending up to 500 miles, the boys knew they could use either three or four 5-watt oscillator tubes in parallel, or one 50-watt oscillator tube. They had decided on the latter method, in making their preparations for departure in faraway Seattle. For one thing, and the biggest, transportation was the most important item. And the 50-watt tube set was the

more compact. Quickly, then, with Mr. Hampton helping, they got out the various parts from their baggage and made the connections.

Farnum, the Northwest policeman, MacDonald, and Dick and Art, watched with puzzled interest and even awe as the four, working in unison, put together the aerial series condenser, the blocking condenser, the grid condenser, the telegraph key, the chopper, the choke coil in the key circuit, the filament volt-meter, the protective condenser in the power circuit, the storage battery and the motor generator.

Farnum and MacDonald asked questions, although Dick and Art were content to sit silent and watch, keen-eyed, as the construction work progressed. Several times, too, Dick arose and went to the water's edge to keep watch against surprise. That any would be attempted for the time being, nobody believed, as they figured the enemy would consider them on guard.

As they worked, Jack explained for the benefit of the others. His description of how the low voltage current from the storage battery flowed into one of the windings of the generator and drives it as a motor thus generating higher voltage in the other winding both puzzled and interested them. By the time the set was ready for use, Farnum, who was something of a mechanic by inclination, had a fair

understanding of the set, but MacDonald, though interested, was bewildered.

"I'm fair beat," he confessed. "Anyhow, just so you boys can make it work!"

"Oh, we'll make it work, all right," Frank assured him. "Well, now, to try to call the Post. What's its call, Mr. MacDonald?"

"I happen to remember," said MacDonald. "We were all so interested when wireless was put in that Captain Jameson gave us a little lecture on it. He said our call would be JSN, abbreviation for his name. We were to remember it, in case of need, when we were able to get to a wireless station. Well, this is a case of need."

"I'll say it is," said big Bob. "Well, come on, fellows, who's going to call?"

It was an honor or distinction that each was eager to have, yet each wanted to force it on the others. A friendly argument developed, to which Mr. Hampton, smiling, put an end.

"Look here, boys, we are wasting time. Suppose you draw straws for the privilege. You all know the Morse and Continental codes, so there is no question of ability involved. Here—" breaking three matchsticks into varying lengths and offering them—"take your choice. Longest wins."

Frank drew the winning stick. The others laughed, clapped him on the back, and without

more ado he began pressing the key and sending out the signal.

"Is somebody on duty at the Post wireless station, do you think, MacDonald?" asked Mr. Hampton.

"Somebody there all the time," the latter replied. "Captain Jameson has found wireless so useful in policing his vast district that he wonders how he ever got along without it."

"Hurray," shouted Frank, "listen. They're answering."

To those who understood the code, the answer was plain:

"JSN answering. Who are you?"

"MacDonald," tapped off Frank, grinning mischievously.

The receptor sounded almost angry.

"Quit your kidding."

"No, I mean it," replied Frank. "This is MacDonald of the Mounted."

"Prove it."

"That'll stump old Frank," chuckled Bob, in an aside. But he was mistaken.

"All right," replied Frank, confidently. "Do you know what my assignment is?"

"Yes," answered JSN, impudently. "Do you?"

"I'm after Lupo the Wolf," tapped Frank. "Now call Captain Jameson."

"You're not MacDonald," replied JSN, "because he doesn't know the code. But you must be speaking for him, for that's right about his assignment. I'll call Captain Jameson. You wait."

"All right," tapped Frank.

Then he turned to the eager MacDonald, who was itching to inquire what was occurring, but had restrained himself until he should be appealed to by Frank, in order not to interrupt. Like all men unfamiliar with telegraphy, whether wireless or by wire, he stood in awe of an operator, and believed it would be terrible, indeed, to interrupt that superior being. Frank took pity now on his curiosity, as well as on that of Farnum, Dick and Art, crowding behind him, and explained what had happened.

"And you actually got the Post?" asked MacDonald, doubt in his voice.

Frank nodded.

"My God," said the big policeman. "Think of the weeks I spent toiling up here, and now you come along and talk across that distance without the loss of a minute's time. Wonderful, well I reckon."

"When Captain Jameson arrives," said Frank, smiling, "I want you to stand close and I'll trans-

late what he says, and you help me with the replies, will you?"

"Won't I be interrupting you?"

"Oh, no," smiled Frank. "You just come close and wait until I speak. It'll be all right. Well"—as the receptor began to click—"I guess this is Captain Jameson now. Yes," with a nod, "it's he, all right. He's asking where you are, Mr. MacDonald."

"Tell him I'm four hundred miles away and close on Lupo. Tell him about yourselves and the fight, and that we're going to round up Lupo's gang and ask him how soon he can send men to help me out with any prisoners we take, and if he can send any at all, and—"

"One minute," said Frank. "I understand. Just wait a bit now, while I telegraph."

To explain at length the details of that telegraphic conversation is unnecessary. Suffice it to say, that the situation was fully explained to Captain Jameson, and that the latter agreed to start a half dozen deputies under a Sergeant to MacDonald's aid, as soon as he should hear again as to the outcome of the expedition against Lupo.

"It'll take a while for the men to reach MacDonald," said Captain Jameson. "But with game plentiful and the season open, he can camp until

they arrive, and thus keep watch over his prisoners, providing he makes any. You people go ahead with your rounding up of Lupo's gang, and then let me hear from you again."

On that agreement, Frank finally closed the conversation, as there was nothing further to be said.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOYS LEFT BEHIND.

"MacDonald, I'll agree to help you round up Lupo and his gang," said Mr. Hampton.

They were all sitting in conference, so to speak, about the camp fire, over which Dick was busy broiling fish which he and Art and the boys had just pulled out of the lake. The appetitizing odor made the nostrils of the three hungry boys twitch with anticipatory delight.

"Fine," said the big ranger, "that's the way I like to hear you talk."

"Yes," said Mr. Hampton, meditatively, "I've got a very good reason why we should cast in our lot and help you, even supposing Lupo flees and draws us off our course."

"What's that?"

"Well, it's an easy enough one to guess. Lupo evidently is after us. That means that he is being paid by somebody to do us in, or at least thwart us in our search. I want to know who that somebody

is. And the only way to find out is to make Lupo prisoner and question him. Moreover, it is possible we may be able to learn something about the mysterious fate of Thorwaldsson and his expedition."

Farnum had been listening closely. He nodded with satisfaction.

"Just what I was thinking myself."

"You're right, Mr. Hampton," said MacDonald. "But such being the case, we'll have to be mighty careful that Lupo doesn't get shot, as then your prospective source of information would vanish."

"True enough, MacDonald," said Mr. Hampton. "We'll all have to be on guard against that misfortune, for misfortune it would be."

He raised his voice, calling the boys and Dick and Art to him. Then he explained how matters stood.

"As soon as we finish breakfast," he said, "we'll start, and you must all be very careful not to shoot Lupo, if it comes to a battle."

As they ate breakfast, Bob who seldom spoke but always to the point, raised a question which had been puzzling him.

"Mr. Hampton, what will we do with all our outfit?" he asked. "And with our radio transmitter, especially? Shall we dismount it? Must we take all our outfit along?"

"It would be too bad to dismount the radio, after

our trouble in getting it erected," said Mr. Hampton. "And to take all our outfit with us would be to hamper our movements. On the other hand, we can't very well leave everything here, for some of Lupo's men might slip away from the main body, in fact, they may already have done so, and they would put us in a terrible plight if they raided the camp, in our absence."

There was silence for a minute or two, then MacDonald spoke.

"We can certainly travel faster without your outfit to hold us back," he said, "especially if Lupo tries to run away. For then we could gain on him at the portages, by traveling light. Look here, Mr. Hampton, this island is easily defended. We've been going to the shore to keep watch on the mainland against surprise. But just a little ways through the trees is a little rise, a knoll, from which you can see the waters all around the island. One man alone could keep guard here."

"But one man couldn't keep off an attack in numbers," objected Mr. Hampton.

"I don't know," said MacDonald. "With them high-powered rifles of yours, it might be done. They carry far, farther than any guns Lupo's Indians and breeds will have. Anyway, two men certainly could manage to hold this place against all comers."

"And three," added Farnum, with a significant look at Mr. Hampton, "could do it even better."

The boys again were at the fire some distance away, helping Dick broil more fish. Mr. Hampton looked at them. He understood the significance in Farnum's tone.

"You don't think they would be in danger here?"

"Less than they would be in with us, Mr. Hampton," said Farnum, lowering his voice as the other had done.

Mr. Hampton considered. The proposal hinted by Farnum, namely, that the boys should be left at camp, tempted him. It was most assuredly true that they would be in far less danger than if they accompanied him against Lupo. And that appealed to him, appealed powerfully. He was grateful to Farnum in his thoughts for his solicitude for the boys' welfare.

On the other hand, he knew them for resourceful in an emergency, and good fighters. And since the idea that information might be obtained from Lupo had come to him it had taken firm possession of his thoughts. Lupo must be captured. Would it not be folly to weaken their force by leaving three young huskies, each of whom, moreover, was a fine rifle shot, behind?

Besides, what would the boys say? If necessary, he could command and they would obey. But Mr.

Hampton was not one to exercise his authority dictatorially.

"I confess I don't know what to do, Farnum," he said finally.

At that moment, a laughing hail from the boys announced the completion of the second batch of food, and their imminent return.

"Make it a post of honor and danger," whispered Farnum, urgently. "Tell them the radio must be guarded, and the outfit, and that if we take these things along our movements will be so hampered that Lupo might escape. Tell them there is a big possibility, too, that some of Lupo's gang may attempt to raid the camp while we are absent."

The boys were so close at hand that Farnum desisted. Mr. Hampton nodded. As they ate, he broached the subject of leaving a guard in camp.

"Three of us ought to stay behind," he added. "That will give sufficient protection for each other, and provide a sure safeguard against surprise. Also, that leaves five of us to go after Lupo. Four of us can go in that bigger of our canoes easily, without any baggage. It carried three of us, with baggage, so far, MacDonald can go in his kyak. So we can hit a fast pace, and make speed at the portages, if any are necessary."

"Who do you intend to leave behind, Dad?" asked Jack quietly.

Mr. Hampton realized from his son's tone that Jack understood his thoughts.

"Well, you three boys would be the natural ones to be selected," he said.

"Oh, I say," protested Bob.

"That's not fair, Mr. Hampton," cried Frank.

Jack was silent. He knew his father. Close association of the motherless boy with the older man since boyhood had attuned their minds. He understood how troubled his father was over the possibility of running them into danger. And he decided he would not add to his difficulties, but would keep quiet, although inwardly he felt dismayed at the prospect of "missing the fun."

"You see how it is, fellows," said Mr. Hampton, and he proceeded to elaborate on the theme furnished him by Farnum. "It's a post of honor and danger combined."

Bob and Frank, however, were not convinced. They started anew to protest. But Jack silenced them.

"All right, fellows, let's be sports," he said. "If the older heads decide they don't need us, we won't force ourselves on them."

"But, Jack," cried Bob and Frank in chorus.

"No, I mean it, fellows," said Jack. "Come over here with me, and I'll tell you something."

Drawing them out of earshot, he added:

"Don't let us make it hard for Dad. He's got troubles enough. He'll feel a lot easier if we aren't along. I know how you feel. I feel the same way about it. But let's make it as easy for Dad as we can. Besides, there is something in what he said, after all. There is no guarantee that some of Lupo's men won't attempt to raid us. For my part, I believe some of them must be watching this island right now, and the minute they see the others safely out of sight, they'll attack us. For they know our numbers, and they will realize the three of us are here alone."

"All right," grumbled Bob. "Have it your own way, let's get some more to eat. I havn't filled up yet."

"This outdoor life makes me ravenous, too," agreed Frank. "And I used to be such a dainty eater. Why, I just pecked at my food."

"You mean you ate food by the peck," said Bob. "For a little guy, you're the heftiest eater I ever saw."

"Little guy, is it?" cried Frank. "I like that."

And without more ado, he made a flying tackle, his arms locking about Bob's knees. The big fellow came down in the brush and Frank piled on top of him with a shout of glee.

"Come on, Jack. We havn't had a good rough-house for a long time."

Grinning, Jack joined in, and the three went rolling and threshing about the bushes like a trio of young bears.

At the fireside, Mr. Hampton's worried look relaxed, and he grinned with enjoyment.

"It's all right, now," he said contentedly. They'll take their disappointment out in a grand wrestling jamboree. Well, let's pack up a little grub and get ready to go."

CHAPTER XI.

BOB FALLS ASLEEP.

In no time at all, Mr. Hampton and his party were ready to set out. Of one thing they were reminded by Jack, the individual radio sets constructed along his own lines, the instrument of which was so small and compact it was contained in the panel of a ring.

"Only trouble with these," Jack said, "is that you can receive but can't transmit. However—"

"However," his father interrupted, "that is all that will be necessary."

"Why?" asked Farnum.

"It is hardly likely that the five of us will get into such a predicament that we shall fail to return," explained Mr. Hampton. "But the boys may be attacked when we are gone, and may be placed in a bad position. Then they can call for us."

"At least we could send out a hurry up call over those sets," said Jack. "As for your calling us, well, that will be a little more complicated, Dad, but it

can be done, if necessary. I insist on your taking that army field set. It came in mighty handy in South America. It is no great job to set it up. And it weighs little. You are taking no other equipment, and you can afford to take it along. It won't be in you way. Here it is, you see, all boxed up complete, handle on the box and everything."

"Right, Jack," said his father. "Now we can communicate with each other easily enough. Well"—looking about him—"are we ready?"

The others nodded.

"Then," Mr. Hampton said, "I propose that we bring our canoes back through the trees, cross the island and make for the mainland on the other side."

Farnum and MacDonald nodded agreement.

"This island is pretty long," said MacDonald, "and it will screen our departure on the other side, in all likelihood. It is hardly likely, as a matter of fact, that we will be seen, for Lupo's party has not shown itself since we beat off that canoe, and probably is somewhere back up that stream out of which your party came."

"You think they cannot see the mainland on the other side of this island from there, Dad?"

"I don't believe so," said Mr. Hampton.

"Even if they do catch a glimpse of us," suggested Farnum, "isn't it probable they'll believe we are pushing on? As a matter of fact, however, we'll

land on the mainland, and carry our canoes inland and then up along the lake till we are out of sight, when we can cross again, I suppose that's your idea, Mr. Hampton?"

"My idea exactly," answered the other. "Well, let's get the canoe and MacDonald's kyak. They have been pulled well up into the bushes, and we can bring them across the island without detection easily enough."

"Wait a minute, Dad," said Jack, laying a detaining hand on his arm. "If they do see you crossing the channel to the mainland, on the other side of the island, they'll know the whole party isn't along, and will realize you aren't leaving, but merely carrying out some maneouvre."

"Maybe, that's what they will think, Jack. On the other hand, they might figure some of the canoes got across beforehand. Anyway, leaving by the back door, so to speak, is our wisest plan, I am sure. The channel to the mainland on the other side is only a narrow one, and the probabilities of our escaping detection are all in our favor."

The largest of the canoes, together with MacDonald's kyak were dragged back through the underbrush and carried across the island to be launched on the other side. Nor did Jack neglect to load the compact field transmitting set in the canoe, as the party pushed off. Then, amid farewells from both

sides, Mr. Hampton and his party set out for the mainland.

Jack watched the canoe and the kyak depart, with something of a sinking of the heart. The same feeling, he suspected, possessed his father. Neither, however, presented other than a brave and cheerful front. As for Bob and Frank, they had gotten over their disappointment at not being permitted to accompany the expedition, to a certain extent, and, cast for the first time since the start of the trip, on their own resources were beginning to enjoy the situation.

"First thing, fellows," said Frank, as the party reached the mainland, hauled up canoe and kyak and struck into the trees, "first thing is to go to this knoll about which MacDonald spoke, and take a view of the field."

"Yes," said big Bob, "then let's divide up into watches, so that the pair of us not drawn for the first watch can get some rest."

"You certainly were born in the Land o' Nod, Bob," scoffed Frank.

"Yes," said Jack, grinning, "if you're as sleepy as all that, we'll count you out right away. Frank and I will draw for the first watch, and you can hit the hay."

"Not so fast," said Bob. "I'll take my chance with the rest of you."

Meantime, they had been mounting the tree-covered hill to which MacDonald had referred and now, reaching the top, found that, despite its low elevation, it was still so much higher than the rest of the island and than the shores of the lake as well, that they commanded a sweeping view not only of the nearer shore to which Mr. Hampton had gone but also of the farther one whence they had come.

Not a sign of human occupation, however, was anywhere apparent. Eastward, although they knew Mr. Hampton and his companions could not have progressed far, yet the trees rimming the lake shore were sufficiently dense to hide any sign of movement. Westward, toward the farther shore, was a thick belt of trees about the mouth of the stream, thinning out farther along the shore in both directions. Neither among the trees nor on the glades, could they discern anybody although Jack, who had been thoughtful enough to bring along their field glasses, scanned the prospect through them a long time before passing them on to the others, who did likewise.

"Well, so far so good," said Jack, with a sigh of relief. "Evidently, or so far as we can see, anyway, Dad and the rest got across undiscovered and now stand a fair chance of crossing the lake farther up undetected."

"Maybe so," said Frank. "Maybe, too, Lupo got discouraged and quit."

"Retreated you mean?" asked Jack.

Frank nodded.

"Oh, you fellows are full of prunes," said Bob. "Why should he quit now, just because we have added one more man to our forces? He's hung to our trail a long time. That means he's not going to quit in a hurry. No, we've got to keep our eyes open."

"That's right," said Jack, thoughtfully, "It won't do to get overconfident and relax our guard."

"Just the same there's no sign of trouble now," said Frank. "And I've got a suggestion."

"Don't lose the idea," said Bob, anxiously. "Hold on to it. Ideas are rare."

"With some people yes," said Frank, grinning. "Not with me."

"Huh."

Bob clutched at Frank, but the other wriggled out of his grasp.

"My idea," he said, "is to take a plunge in the channel your father crossed, Jack. I'm hot and sticky and tired, and a swim would go fine just before I turn in and leave Bob on watch. What do you say?"

"So I'm to have the first watch, hey?" said Bob. "It's been all decided, has it? Well, well. All right,

run along, Frankie, me lad. I'm not so anxious for a swim. I'll just start my watch here and now."

"Bob, you're a good sport," said Frank, throwing an arm over the shoulders of his big chum, between whom and himself was a depth of feeling which seldom was expressed in words.

"Oh, run along and take your swim."

Bob playfully shoved the pair of them down the hill. Laughing, they obeyed. As they disappeared among the trees, Bob selected a spot at the base of a spruce on the top of the knoll, sat down with the glasses in his lap and his eyes on the westward shore of the lake, where Lupo's half-breeds had last been seen, and prepared to keep watch. His back was against the trunk of the tree, and he made himself as comfortable as possible.

It was a really comfortable position and, when one is tired and sitting idle, a comfortable position is conducive to drowsiness. It was so with Bob. He had had but little sleep in the last two days. He had worked hard. The air was warm and drowsy, as only the air of the short hot Summer of the north country, when the sun never sets, can be. Presently his head began to nod, and there was a buzzing in his ears as of the drowsy hum of bees. He caught himself, and sat bolt upright, rubbing his eyes vigorously with his fists. Then he leaned back against the tree trunk again, and again began to

nod. This time, the jerk with which he awakened was longer in coming.

Bob got up and stretched.

"Mustn't go to sleep," he reflected. "Nothing in sight, though. Not much use to worry. Ho, hum."

He resumed his seat. Imperceptibly, his eyes drifted shut. He sat through the transition period between sleeping and waking, unaware that he was yielding to slumber, merely pleasantly conscious of relaxed limbs and thoughts. Before he was aware his head nodded, his eyes closed, his chin touched his chest, and he slept.

Meanwhile Jack and Frank were thoroughly enjoying their plunge. The water was warm, there was no wind, and they swam, dived, floated to their heart's content. Neither realized the passage of time until Frank, suddenly filled with compunction at their long absence, while Bob kept watch, scrambled ashore and looked at his watch, laid out on top of his clothes.

"Great guns, Jack," he announced, "we've been gone an hour. Good old Bob. He was mighty nice about sending us off to swim while he kept watch, but you know he likes to swim, too. He'll be thinking it's a low trick on our part to stay so long. Maybe he'll want to come and take a plunge himself, when one of us gets back to relieve him."

Jack also had a guilty feeling and, as is the way with most of us, attempted to make excuses.

"He might just as well have come along," he said. "Nothing's going to happen."

They were pulling on their clothes.

Suddenly they heard Bob's voice raised in a distant shout, calling their names. Then followed a brisk outbreak of rifle shots.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SURPRISE ATTACK.

"An attack," gasped Jack.

"And we're not there to help old Bob," cried Frank, in an agony of apprehension. "Come on. Don't stop to finish dressing."

Shirt flapping out over his trousers, shoes unlaced, Frank frantically buckled on his revolver and cartridge belt, seized his rifle and started on a dead run through the trees. Jack did likewise. As they ran, they heard the shots continuing intermittently, and then once more—clearer and closer at hand, as they neared the knoll—came Bob's voice:

"Frank, Jack, they're rushing me. Look out for yourselves."

There was a crashing in the brush ahead.

"Down, Jack, some of them coming."

The two flung themselves prone behind a spruce whose low branches swept the ground. The sounds were off to their left. A moment later the forms of four men, hurrying towards the channel whence

they had just come, could be seen eight or ten yards away.

Jack's face was pale, his lips set. Frank was trembling with excitement and fear—not for himself, if the truth must be told, for the plucky lad was not thinking of himself, but for his chum, who was holding off the main attack alone.

"Steady, Frank," whispered Jack. "Bob's life depends on us. This is no time for false compunctions. You'll have to shoot to kill."

"All right, Jack."

Then the two rifles spoke as one, and two of the runners stumbled, flung out their arms to save themselves, and pitched forward. The others spun about towards the direction whence the boys had fired, but a second time Frank and Jack fired, and they, too, fell.

"No time to see how badly they were hit," said Jack. "Come on. Old Bob's still alive and shooting."

Forward they dashed once more, not neglecting, however, to keep wary watch as they ran. No more of the enemy were seen, however. There was a sudden uproar ahead, the shots ceased. Cries of astonishment, stupefaction, even a note of fear, went up from several throats. Above all was a bull-like roar that they readily identified as coming from Bob's throat.

Frank's heart gave an exultant leap. He knew that yell. It came only when Bob went berserk, and fought with his hands. He had heard it when they fought Mexican bandits, Chinese smugglers, rum runners on Long Island and Incas in the Andes. He knew well what it meant.

Almost at the same moment, they burst into the glade at the base of the knoll, and came to a dead halt, eyes popping, standing as if rooted to the spot.

But only for a moment. Then they started tearing up the hillside, among the scattered trees. For at the top was a whirling heap of figures, as if caught up in a cyclone, and well they knew what it portended. Somewhere in the center of the group was big Bob, at close grips with the enemy, and not caring how many they numbered.

Would they be in time? Could they help Bob before some half-breed succeeded in sticking a knife into him?

But Bob proved that he could handle his own affairs, for while they were still several yards away, first one and then another half-breed was spewed from the miniature whirlwind, and then Bob could be seen with several men clinging to his legs and another on his back, attempting apparently to throttle him. The big fellow's hands went up and back. They settled under the other's armpits. There was a sudden mighty heave and wrench, and

then the man on Bob's back came flying through the air, straight for Bob's two comrades. He had been tossed from Bob's shoulders, as a strong man would toss a sack of meal. Frank and Jack leaped aside, and the man struck the ground, rolled over and over and then lay still, crumpled up against the trunk of a spruce.

Recovering from their surprise, Jack and Frank leaped forward. But their intervention was unnecessary. Standing like a young Colossus, legs apart, with a man wreathed about each, Bob bent down. One big hand seized each by the neck. Then the two heads were bumped together once, twice. The half-breeds collapsed. Their grip on Bob's legs relaxed, and he tossed them aside, and they, too, lay still. He had knocked them out.

Then Bob did a surprising thing. He leaped with a murderous look for the two boys.

"More of you, hey?"

They sprang aside nimbly, eluding his grasp.

"Bob, Bob, it's us."

"What? What? Oh, you—"

Bob looked at them, the battle lust dying in his eyes, and recognition dawning. It was followed by a wide grin.

"Oh, it's you."

"Bob, old thing, that was the greatest fight in

history," cried Frank, hysterically, clapping his chum on the back.

"Never saw the like," said Jack, doing likewise. "Thank God, Bob, you're alive."

"Never was more alive in my life," said Bob. "Hey, they're running away."

He darted away from his chums and sprang downhill. True enough. The two whom he had disposed of first, who had dropped out of the fight, had gained their feet and were running madly through the trees.

Jack ran after Bob and restrained him.

"Let them go, Bob. They are alone. There are three others here we must tie up before they come to."

Bob followed him back to where Frank was bending over the man whom the big fellow had tossed over his head. The half-breed was recovering consciousness, and beginning to moan.

"Broken arm, I think," said Frank. "He'll not bother us. How about the two whose heads you bumped together?"

"They're recovering consciousness, too," said Jack. Nothing much the matter with them. We had better tie them up, so they can't cause us any trouble."

"Here, take the other felow's belt and tie his hands behind his back with it," said Bob. At the

same time, he suited action to word in the case of the nearer of the two, whipped off the fellow's belt and tied him with it.

"Won't they try to run away, Bob? Ought we to tie their legs, too?"

"No, we'll just keep an eye on them. Let's take a look at the other. If his arm is broken we'll have to set it somehow, I guess. Rather pitch him in the lake, though. He's a villainous looking rascal. Tried to choke me, too, and darn near succeeded."

While Frank kept an eye on the two other prisoners, who had now recovered consciousness and were beginning to realize their situation but lay still under the threat of Frank's rifle, Bob and Jack examined the third man.

His senses were returning, and he moaned a good deal. Examinations revealed, however, that his arm had not been broken, merely badly wrenched.

"I'm mighty glad of that," said Jack. "We'd have been up against it to set a broken arm."

"Oh, we could do it, all right, if necessary," said Bob. "But I'm glad, too, that it isn't necessary. But, say, Jack"—with sudden recollection, and an air of anxiety—"there were four more of these scoundrels. We'll have to look out for them."

Jack's voice shook a little as he replied.

"I think not, Bob," he said. "Frank and I saw

them first. We ambushed them, practically. They didn't have a chance."

"You don't mean—"

Jack's gaze was steady but troubled.

"We had to do it, old man," he said. "It was our life or theirs. And yours, especially. When we heard your shout, and those first shots, Frank went wild with fear that you had been trapped while we were away enjoying ourselves. And I guess I felt as bad as he did."

"Hey, fellows," interrupted Frank, hailing them, "the two that got away must have been all that were left. They've jumped in a canoe and are paddling like mad for the mainland."

"Can you see them?" called Jack, starting to the top of the knoll to join his chum.

"How would I know what they were doing if I couldn't?" rejoined Frank. "Yes, I can see them. Look there."

He pointed.

"Tie up that other fellow, Bob, and make him walk up here to join his little playmates," Jack called back.

Bob complied. The man groaned, but by now he had fully recovered his senses, and he obeyed Bob's order to move with an alacrity that showed he stood in abject fear of the husky young American.

Frank pointed out the fleeting men, who were

nearing the mainland, and paddling with superhuman energy, as if fleeing from the Old Nick, no less.

"That accounts for all of them, I guess," he said. "So we can sit down now, Bob, while you tell us how it happened."

"Not much to tell," said Bob, sinking to a seated position against the tree trunk. "Except I went to sleep and was almost surprised, but not quite. My first intimation that the enemy was near was when I heard somebody talking in the trees at the foot of this knoll. Or, did I hear anybody? Was it just the old sixth sense giving warning of danger? I don't rightly know. At any rate, I woke with a start and looking down through the trees saw a bunch of half-breeds making their way towards the other side of the island.

"I tell you I was scared. I felt guilty as sin. Here I had promised to keep watch, and, instead, had fallen asleep. As a result, the half-breeds had landed on the island, and were heading for where you fellows were swimming. I had endangered your lives. What should I do? That was the question.

"But I didn't waste must time, puzzling over it. I knew I had to give you fellows warning or you would be taken by surprise. So I yelled to you as loud as I could to look out. I guess they hadn't seen

me up till then. But when I yelled, they saw me quick enough, and several of them opened fire, and ——"

"Wait a minute, Bob," Frank interrupted, his eyes shining. "They hadn't seen you, and you could have let them pass without attracting their attention, but you yelled, just to give us a chance for our white alley. That's, that's—"

"Oh, forget it," said Bob, uncomfortably. "You'd have done the same. Anyway," he hurried on, "they split up into two groups, and one kept on going, while the other rushed me before I could do much shooting, and—well, I guess you know the rest," he concluded, lamely.

"I'll say we do," said Frank, gripping his big comrade's shoulder. "Boy, I'll never see the like of that fight again."

"But, Bob, I wonder why they rushed you instead of trying to shoot you down," said Jack.

"Search me," said Bob.

"I'll bet I know," said Frank.

"What?" asked both.

"They wanted to take you alive, Bob, for some reason of their own. Probably, would have tried to take us alive, too, if they'd gotten the chance."

"Well, maybe so," said Bob. "Anyhow, that's that. Now what shall we do?"

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. HAMPTON RECALLED.

JACK and Frank regarded each other with distaste and even horror in their eyes.

"Has to be done, though," said Jack, as if in answer to a remark of Frank's.

Frank nodded.

"I know."

"What are you two chumps talking about?" asked Bob.

"Those four men we shot down, you know," Frank explained.

"Think you—"

Bob's question went uncompleted.

"I don't know," Frank replied. "We shot straight. "It was your life and ours against theirs."

"Well, come on. I know how you feel, but I expect that's the first thing to be attended to. If any of them is no more than wounded, it will be up to us to do what we can for him."

"Right, Bob," said Jack.

"Come on," Frank said shortly, starting down the hillside, in the direction of their successful, though impromptu, ambuscade.

"Go easy," warned Bob. "If they're able to shoot, they'll take a crack at us."

Bob's advice was followed, and the trio approached the spot warily. But precaution was needless, or, while still some distance away, they could see the four bodies outstretched motionless where they had fallen. Frank's face went white, and he shuddered. Jack was pale. Big Bob, although he had had no hand in the affray, had to take a grip on himself, in order to force his laggard steps to continue. Though many were the affairs of danger in which they had been, the boys had never before shot to kill nor had death been brought so close to them.

Frank stopped. He was trembling violently.

"I—I can't look at them," he gasped.

Bob threw an arm over his shoulders.

"You and Jack stay here," he ordered, gruffly. "I had no hand in this. I'm the fellow to attend to it. Wait for me."

At that Frank protested, and started to proceed. But Bob shoved him back, kindly but firmly.

"The pair of you have been through enough," he said. "Do as I say. Wait here."

And with quick, firm step, keeping himself to the

task, he plunged on through the trees. For a moment or two both Frank and Jack watched him fascinatedly, then Frank sank down to a sitting position, elbows propped on his knees, his face in his hands. Jack faced about, and stared unseeing through the trees.

Presently, Bob's solid, crunching footsteps could be heard approaching, and they looked up. His face was grave, but unflinching.

"Look here, fellows," he said, firmly, "may as well face the facts. All four were killed instantly. Drilled through the—— But why discuss it? The fact is, they're dead. They were rascals of the first water, and, as you say, it was their lives or ours. Self-preservation is the first law of Nature. Now, what are we going to do about it? We haven't any tools to dig with."

Frank shook himself into alertness.

"Let's get the axes—our outfit has some—and cut off some spruce boughs and cover them over. Then we can roll some stones on top."

As quickly as possible, without speaking during the task, and working feverishly, the three carried out Frank's idea. Then, back at camp, they sat down and brewed a pot of coffee. The hot, scalding liquid steadied their shaken nerves.

"Guess we better try to get in touch with your father, Jack," suggested Bob, at length.

"How long have they been gone?"

Bob looked at his watch.

"Three hours. Seems like a lifetime."

"Things have certainly happened fast," said Frank. "Thank goodness, that party missed our radio. If they had destroyed it, we would have been out of luck."

"More luck than I deserve," said Bob, savagely. "Think of going to sleep on the job. If I had been awake, they never would have been able to land."

"Forget it, Bob. You certainly have nothing to reproach yourself with."

"Oh, that's nonsense," said the big fellow. "I'm always getting you into trouble."

Frank smiled.

"Yes, and then getting us out again," he said.

"Well, let's try the radio, anyway," suggested Jack. "They've been gone three hours. With the best of luck they can't have made more than eight or ten miles, considering the detour they planned to take, and everything."

"Couldn't have gotten that far away in a straight line," said Frank.

"No, I guess not. But what if they aren't prepared for a call from us?"

"Oh, with that improved ring set of yours, your father will be proceeding fully equipped to hear from you," said Frank. "He need only wear the

headphone, and I seem to remember he said on leaving that he would keep it on most of the time."

Jack nodded. The improvement in the ring set, spoken of by Frank, had done away with the necessity for the umbrella aerial.

"All right," he said. "I'll call Dad on 200 meters. If he gets the message we ought to hear from him shortly, for he'll at once unlimber the field transmitting set and call us back."

While Jack sent out a terse description of the fight and its outcome, Frank and Bob decided to steady their nerves by fishing and went down to the lakeside. They had reasonable success and had pulled out a number of fish when Jack joined them.

"Send out your message, Jack?" Frank inquired.

"Yes, and heard from Father in reply, too."

"What? Why, great guns, how long have we been here? Surely, you can't have had time to hear from your father?"

"But, I have," affirmed Jack. "You've been here more than an hour."

Bob and Frank looked at each other. In all that time, neither had spoken a word. They had just dozed over their lines, pulling in an occasional fish. Frank laughed.

"I guess we went to sleep with our eyes open," he confessed. "Well, what did your father say?"

"They made a long trek up the lake before cross-

ing over, and are not very far away—somewhere up in that direction—on the other shore, there," said Jack, pointing. "Dad was worried as the deuce at my story, and they're coming back."

"Coming back? Why? It's all over now."

"That's what I told him, Frank. But he's coming back, anyway. They're going to get back to the lake, and come straight down to the island. Ought to be here in a couple of hours or less."

"May as well wait dinner for them, in that case," observed Bob. "Or what meal is it? Breakfast, lunch, or dinner? I'm sure I don't know. This perpetual sunshine has me all turned around. I don't know whether it's day or night."

"Same here," confessed Frank. "I do know, though, that I'm beginning to get up an appetite." Then a thought, a thought which his somnolent day-dreaming over the fishing lines had driven away for the time, crossed his mind, and he paled. "I don't know though"—catching his breath—"whether I'll ever want to eat again."

Jack looked at him sharply. So did Bob. The big fellows noted with apprehension the twisted, stricken look on their slighter chum's face, and the haunted appearance of his eyes. To Bob's keen eyes, moreover, two hectic spots glowing brightly in the dark tan of Frank's cheeks were apparent.

"Look here, old man," said Bob, anxiously, "you

want to quit thinking about that or you'll be sick."

"Sick?" Frank tried to force a laugh. "I'm the healthiest invalid ever you saw."

"No, Frank, I mean it. Put that thought out of your mind, or you will be sick. "Why"—laying a hand on his brow—"you've got a fever right now."

Jack was worried, too.

"Great guns, Frank, you must take Bob's advice. What if you came down sick? We'd be in a pretty fix."

"Oh, you fellows make me tired," said Frank, irritatedly. "I'm all right."

But Bob's worry was not routed. He took his chum by an arm and started marching him toward camp.

"I'm going to give you a dose of calomel and make you lie down," he said. "Come on."

"Calomel? Have a heart."

"Yes, calomel," said Bob, firmly. "That's what you need, that and a nap."

Picking up the fish, Jack followed. And at the camp, despite Frank's vehement protests, he was made to swallow a liberal dose of calomel, and then to lie down on a couch of spruce boughs, over him the little tent belonging to Mr. Hampton to provide shade from the northern sun. Jack and Bob sat down, some distance away, and started cleaning the fish. They talked together in low tones.

Presently, after several glances toward the motionless figure, Bob arose and tiptoed close to it. On his return, he nodded, smiling slightly, at Jack.

"Asleep," he said. "Didn't want to do it, but overworked Nature was too much for him. I'm a little bit worried. His nerves got a severe shock. But I guess he'll be all right when he wakes up."

Then he glanced more keenly at Jack.

"Look here, you've been through the same experience. I had a nap. Now you're going to take one. Sleep will be good medicine for you, too. We don't want two sick ones on our hands."

Jack didn't protest, but also turned in beside Frank, and in a few minutes was sound asleep. As Bob had said, overworked Nature claimed her dues.

CHAPTER XIV.

A REVELATION.

THIS time Bob did not go to sleep on the job, but at the first faint indication that somnolence was stealing upon him, arose and stamped about vigorously. Once, prompted by a humane inclination, he paused by the three prisoners who lay in the shade, hands and feet tied, and proffered them a drink of water. The courtesy and thoughtfulness was totally unexpected, as Bob could see by the surprise in their eyes, although no words were exchanged, and they drank eagerly in great gulps. The half-breed whom Bob had pitched over his head was in considerable pain because of his wrenched arm, as Bob could see from his occasional writhings, and Bob decided to chance trouble by loosening his bonds. In addition, he rummaged their stores and brought out a bottle of liniment for sprains and bruises, with which he bathed the twisted member.

"You good man," whispered the other, gazing at

him, as Bob bent to the task, and speaking in a voice barely audible to Bob's ears, and certainly not to the other two men a short distance away. "I tell you something—not now—bimeby—when they not know."

Bob thought quickly.

"All right," he responded, in the same low tone. "I'll fix it."

"Yes." The other nodded. "You fix it."

"Now what in the world has he got to tell me?" Bob asked himself, as he moved away. "Probably, something about Lupo the Wolf. At any rate, I can't see what else it can be. Was grateful because I gentled him a little—after first maltreating him." He smiled at the irony of this thought. "Well, Mr. Hampton will soon be here, no doubt. Then there will be a chance to question him apart from his fellows."

And with that, he dismissed the matter from his mind. Jack now rolled over, sat up and came out from under the tent, yawning. Frank continued sunk in heavy slumber.

"By George," said Bob, looking at his watch, "two hours since you started to take your nap. Run down to the shore, will you, and take a look to see if there is any sign of your father. We left these fellows alone once"—nodding to their prisoners—"but I felt it wasn't wise to try it too

often. Something might happen. So I've been sticking close to camp."

Jack nodded.

"Yes, that time you were fishing. It was foolish for me to run down after you, but I just had to tell you about hearing from Father."

He set out for the shore.

A few minutes later, Bob heard his comrade give a joyful shout. It was answered by a fainter hail from the water. Faint though it was, however, it was unmistakable. Mr. Hampton was approaching.

Presently there was a babble of voices approaching, and the returning party came into view, Jack in the lead flanked by his father and Farnum, with MacDonald, Dick and Art bringing up the rear. Jack was eagerly explaining what had occurred at camp since his father's departure.

"Hello, Bob," said Mr. Hampton, coming up, and gripping the big fellow's hand hard. "Had some excitement while we were gone?"

"Yes, we did, Mr. Hampton. Thought this was going to be a loafing assignment you left us on—nothing to do but hang around camp and swim and fish—and the minute you turn your backs something happens."

"How's Frank?"

"Jack told you, did he?"

Mr. Hampton nodded.

"He's still asleep," said Bob. "The necessity of shooting to kill was a shock to his nerves. Nature took him in hand. "See." He indicated where Frank lay as in a stupor in the tent, unmoved by the arrival of the returning party.

"He'll sleep for hours yet," said Mr. Hampton, "if we don't make too much noise. I'll caution the others. Best medicine in the world for him. He'll be all right when he wakes, I expect."

While Dick put on the fish, for all were hungry, Bob and Jack, in lowered voices, told the others all that had occurred. Bob repeated his condemnation of himself for having fallen asleep and permitted the enemy to land unopposed, but Mr. Hampton rested a hand on his shoulder, and told him not to be foolish.

"In the first place," he said, "there seemed to be no reason why you should keep strict watch. It hardly seemed likely these fellows would boldly approach the island."

"Expect they saw us set out, after all," suggested MacDonald, "and figured the whole party hadn't gone, and that them left behind would be on 'tother side of the island, so's they could land and surprise 'em."

Nods of agreement followed this statement. It was, indeed, the most likely explanation. Over the

puzzle as to why Bob had not been slain by those attacking him, but who, instead, had tried merely to make him prisoner, nobody had any suggestion to offer other than that earlier advanced by the boys themselves, that they enemy wished to take them alive.

"Reckon Lupo thought he'd get some information from you," said MacDonald.

"But he wasn't here," Bob protested.

"No, but you can bet they were actin' on his orders."

Bob bethought him of the prisoner, who had whispered that he had something to tell him. He explained to the others. Mr. Hampton thought for a moment.

"I have it," he said. "Art, bring the others here and we'll question them. At the same time, Bob, do you slip off and talk to your man. We'll keep the pair occupied, so that they won't be able to see. Tell your man that presently, then, we'll call him up to be questioned, too, and that he's to pretend sullen obstinacy and refuse—in the presence of his comrades—to answer any questions."

Bob nodded and, as Art went for the pair, he slipped away in an opposite direction. Executing a flank movement through the trees, he presently arrived on the opposite side of the camp and got behind the tree, against which the man with the

wrenched shoulder was sitting. In a rapid whisper he communicated Mr. Hampton's instructions to the other. The fellow comprehended, and then in a low tone, scarcely audible to Bob, who strained to hear, communicated surprising intelligence.

Bob heard him out, then with a final word of caution, again slipped away, once more skirted camp through the trees, and approached the group from the waterside. The two other half-breeds were being grilled, but without success. At Bob's approach, Mr. Hampton turned again to Art.

"Bring that other fellow here," he commanded. "See if he knows any more than these men."

The man was brought into the council, but, acting on instructions, maintained an obstinate silence.

"Oh, take them away, and feed them," said Mr. Hampton finally, as if despairing of obtaining any information. "We'll talk to them later, after I've eaten. Dick's fish will get cold if we don't fall to, and I'm too hungry to delay with these rascals."

The men, whose ankle bonds had been removed, were returned to the other side of the camp and, with their hands untied, were permitted to eat under the watchful eyes of Dick and Art. Then once more they were tied up.

Meantime, Mr. Hampton turned eagerly to Bob, as soon as the trio of prisoners was out of hearing.

"Out with it, Bob," he said. "I can see you're dying to tell us. Must be important."

"It is," said Bob, emphatically.

"What did he say?"

"Mr. Hampton, you think we're alone in this wilderness except for Lupo's gang?"

"I don't know who else would be here. This is country that white men never get into."

"Well, Thorwaldsson, Farrell and three followers of their party of ten are not more than two hundred miles away; perhaps less than that."

"What! Say that again."

Mr. Hampton was so excited he almost dropped his portion of fish into the fire.

"It's true," said Bob. "At least that's what this fellow, Long Tom, declares. Long Tom—that's his name."

"How does he know?"

It was MacDonald who asked the question, and Bob turned to him.

"That's what I asked him. He said Thorwaldsson had been attacked before he reached the oil country, and Thorwaldsson, Farrell and four of his men cut off from their camp. Those in the camp were killed, and Thorwaldsson's supplies looted. He says a big band of Indians committed the outrage."

"At whose orders?" asked Mr. Hampton.

"Merely operating on their own, says Long Tom. He was with them. They wanted the loot. What they didn't understand, they destroyed."

"That's why nothing has been heard of Thorwaldsson," said Mr. Hampton, "for his radio equipment must have been among 'the things they didn't understand.' Go on, Bob."

"Long Tom thinks Thorwaldsson spent the Winter with the Eskimos up on the rim of the Arctic Ocean."

"Where has he been? What became of the Indians?"

"They were a hunting party, as far as I could gather, who, after chasing Thorwaldsson up to the Eskimos, left the country. But Long Tom wintered with some Eskimos near Union Straits himself, and this Spring started out. Then he fell in with Lupo, who he knew, and joined him."

"And how does he know where Thorwaldsson is now? Why does he say Thorwaldsson is so close?"

"Says he ran across an Eskimo hunter on his way out, who told of Thorwaldsson having wintered with his tribe, and learned Thorwaldsson was on his way out down the Coppermine—or up it, whichever you choose to call it. Though that was weeks ago, he believes Thorwaldsson would be following watercourses that would put him about one hun-

dred and fifty or two hundred miles to the northeast of us."

"Well, Bob, you certainly learned a lot," said Mr. Hampton. "Was that everything? Or did Long Tom know or have anything to say about Lupo?"

"He doesn't know why Lupo is after us, except that it has something to do with Thorwaldsson. That's all I could get out of him. Pretty indefinite, but it was the best I could do."

"Indefinite! Nonsense, Bob. That is something to go on, indeed."

"And to think that old Bob got it all just because he was kind to a fellow with a sore arm and put some liniment on it," said Jack.

CHAPTER XV.

MAC DONALD TURNS BACK.

TAKING everything into consideration, Mr. Hampton decided that before any further steps were taken, the wisest plan would be for all to get a good rest. Frank still lay as if in a stupor; Jack looked and confessed to being shaky; even Bob was tired from the strain of the terrific fight through which he had gone, coming upon the top of many hours of exhausting travel. As for the rest, they had done practically three days' work with little or no rest in the short interval between.

"Altogether," said Mr. Hampton, summing up, "we are in no fit condition to set out in immediate pursuit of Lupo and the remainder of his men, nor even to decide wisely as to what to do. It may be that the best plan would be not to pursue Lupo but to set off at once to try and find Thorwaldsson. I, for one, am too tired even to think straight. So I vote that we make camp, set watches and turn in for a good rest. I believe I could sleep the clock around."

"If you think you can trust me with the first watch, Mr. Hampton," muttered Bob, shamefacedly, "I'd like to have it. I'll promise you not to go to sleep on the job again."

Mr. Hampton slapped the big fellow on the back in kindly fashion, as Bob leaned forward, seated on the ground beside him.

"Forget it, Bob," he said. "You have nothing with which to reproach yourself. Certainly you can have the first watch, if you want it. I expect the rest of us will be only too glad of the opportunity to turn in at once. As to there being any further danger, however, I very much doubt it. You boys have given Lupo a terrible blow. With four men killed and three prisoners, he must be short-handed. If he had only twelve or fourteen, as we believe, his number now is less than ours. The consequence is, that I cannot conceive of his attempting again to attack us here on the island. However, a watch must be kept, so go to it."

Everybody agreeing with this program, Bob took the first watch and the rest scattered around the camp, under the spruces, and soon were sleeping soundly. When the time to change watches came, with nothing alarming having broken the calm, Bob waked MacDonald, and himself turned in. After that, he did not have even a disturbing dream and was disturbed by nothing until awakened by being

shaken. He looked up and found Frank bending above him, his face alight with merriment.

"Hey, which of the Seven Sleepers are you?" demanded Frank.

Bob ignored the query, his mind leaping at once to the picture of Frank as he had last seen him. In his voice was a note of thankfulness at finding Frank thus carefree, as he said:

"How do you feel, old man?"

"Never better," confessed Frank. "Sleep is certainly the right medicine, isn't it?"

"Don't I know it!"

Bob yawned luxuriously, and rubbed his eyes.

"Come on, Bob, let's take a plunge in the channel. Just got up myself. It'll wake us up, make us feel good. Everybody's up now, and Dick fixing to get breakfast. He and Art and MacDonald are fishing. Mr. Hampton and Farnum are talking things over. And here comes Jack, just piled out of the feathers, too. The three of us can have a fine swim."

Bob was agreeable to this proposition, and they set out for the place where Frank and Jack had gone in for a plunge before. Without referring to the tragic little mound beneath which lay the bodies of the four half-breeds shot down by Frank and Jack, the boys, as if by common consent, lay their course through the trees so as to avoid passing near it.

The water, as Frank had predicted, was delightfully invigorating, and refreshed and with the young blood tingling in their veins, after a long sleep and a good swim, they returned to camp. They brought voracious appetites with them, but fortunately the fishermen had pulled in a big haul of beauties, and these, together with flapjacks made by that skilful chef, Art, and washed down with coffee tasting like none ever made in city restaurants, the whole having the tang of the outdoors and woodland smoke for sauce, made a delectable repast.

"Now," said Mr. Hampton, at its conclusion, "now for a discussion of what's to be done."

Thereupon he set forth the facts of the situation. Lupo with five or six men at most was still at large. He might have turned back. He might be in hiding nearby. He might have gone on ahead in search of Thorwaldsson. In any case, Mr. Hampton declared, he felt it would be a waste of time to search for him in view of the fact that they had learned Thorwaldsson was somewhere to the north and east and their primary object was to join forces with that explorer. He wanted to know what the others had to say.

Farnum, who had been talking matters over with Mr. Hampton, sat silent, nodding approval. The other was stating his own views. But MacDonald voiced a protest.

"From your point of view, sir," he said, "I reckon you're right. But am I to let Lupo escape now that I come so close to gettin' him? And what am I to do with three prisoners on my hands?"

"I've been turning that phase of the situation over and over," said Mr. Hampton. "I cannot see that we can afford to diverge in pursuit of Lupo, now that we have pretty definite information through that fellow, Long Tom, of Thorwaldsson's presence alive and with some of his men in this wilderness. I know what a blow it will be to you to give up the chase, but it can't be helped. You have three prisoners, and can't very well watch them and pursue Lupo, too. They are criminals, and as a member of the Mounted you must take them in. We can't leave you to handle them alone, however, and——"

He paused.

"And what, sir," prompted MacDonald.

"Well, the least we can do, MacDonald, is to leave one of our number with you. That will enable you to keep guard against surprise, watch over your prisoners, and wait for the arrival of aid from your Post. We'll wireless your Captain Jameson full details of all that has occurred, give him your position here, and then you can wait for relief."

MacDonald looked thoughtful. He was silent several minutes, while none spoke, but all watched him expectantly.

"If you won't help me try and round up Lupo, you won't, and that's all there is to it," he said, finally. "Not as I blame you, neither. You got your job, to git hold of Thorwaldsson and help him. With only a handful o' men he may be in trouble, too. Seems natural-like, if whoever is agin you fellows sent this cut-throat Lupo to cut you off, he'd likely be after Thorwaldsson, too."

Mr. Hampton nodded.

"That's what I'm afraid of," he said, "that Thorwaldsson may need our aid."

"Just so," continued MacDonald. "Such bein' the case, your best plan is to try and find him soon as you can."

"Then you agree to my plan?"

"Not so fast," said MacDonald. "You'll give me a man, hey?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Why—I——"

"Give me this feller," said MacDonald, laying a hand on Bob who sat beside him. "He's a fighter."

"I couldn't do that, MacDonald. The boys must come with me."

"All right. Only that fight he put up—that was a good one. Kind o' wished I could have him by me. Well, then, let me have this feller. Kin see

he's used to big woods and river country. He'd make a good Mounty."

This time MacDonald pointed the stem of his pipe at Dick.

"What do you say, Dick?" asked Mr. Hampton. "It's up to you?"

"I'd have to go out with the Mounties to their Post, wouldn't I? Probably have to winter there."

MacDonald nodded.

"Get you a job on the Force," he said.

Dick's eyes shone. Middle-aged though he was, he was alone in life, loved the wilderness, and still thrilled to adventure.

"That so?" he asked. "Need men?"

"Always room for a good one."

"All right. It's a go," said Dick.

MacDonald nodded approval, spat in the fire, then turned again to Mr. Hampton.

"Such being the case," he said, "when you talk to Captain Jameson over that there contraption, just tell him I'm on my way in."

"What?"

"Sure. Think Dick and me would sit here with three no-account breeds on our hands and wait for help from four hundred miles away to arrive? No. We'll take 'em in."

"But two of you, alone, and with three prisoners on your hands!"

"Nothing to that. Once I brought in four single-handed. Never thought of calling for help except I had luck enough to capture Lupo and more of his gang."

Mr. Hampton looked astounded. He turned to Dick.

"But how about you, Dick?"

"If MacDonald says so, I'm game."

"Knew you would be," said MacDonald. That's settled. Now call Captain Jameson, and let's get goin'. You want to be on your way, and we may as well be on ours."

"But, MacDonald," said Mr. Hampton, trying one last protest, "suppose Lupo and the remainder of his gang see you start, and follow and attack you. What then?"

"Huh." MacDonald's eyes snapped. "Couldn't ask for no better luck. I'd get a shot at him then."

Farnum interrupted at this stage.

"It's no use trying to stop him and Dick," he said. "I know Dick and I know these men of the Mounted. They're holy terrors. And the pair of them will get away with it, too."

Mr. Hampton knew when he was beaten, and abandoned his protests. Captain Jameson once more was called by wireless, and given a full account of what had occurred. He approved MacDonald's

scheme and promised there would be a position on the Force for Dick when he arrived.

"Well, Dick," said Mr. Hampton, after all arrangements were made for departure, and he led him aside, "I've been pleased, indeed, with your ready help and cheerfulness on the trip. I hate to part company with you. Here is a check for the full sum I promised you for this Summer's work. And here in addition is something to remember me by."

Into Dick's unwilling hand he pressed a handsome gold watch which he himself had worn for some years.

"Oh, Mr. Hampton, this is too good for a rough fellow like me to carry," protested Dick.

"Now, now, nonsense," said Mr. Hampton. "Nothing is too good for you, old man. I want you to keep that to remember me by."

"I don't need the watch for that, sir," said Dick gruffly, sticking it in his pocket nevertheless.

CHAPTER XVI.

REINDEER SIGHTED.

THE big canoe which Dick and Art had captured from the Indians was turned over to MacDonald. It was easily capable of transporting five—the three prisoners, MacDonald and Dick. With the two latter in the bow and stern respectively, and the prisoners unarmed between, there was little danger so long as MacDonald and Dick maintained reasonable watchfulness. Two of the half-breeds were cowed and broken in spirit, moreover, while Long Tom was *hors de combat* on account of the injury to his arm, and would be for some time to come. MacDonald's skin kyak was to be towed behind, containing his slender outfit, and one of the prisoners could carry the whole business alone at portages.

MacDonald had entered the lake by a considerable stream flowing into it from the southwest, and not the stream down which the Hampton party had come. He set out for this other stream before the others quit the island, with the intention of retrac-

ing his steps into the wilderness in large measure. This would facilitate his travel. Farther to the south, he said, was a large river which could be reached by a ten-mile portage, and down which they could travel for many miles.

"If you ever want to join the Mounted," he said to Bob, to whom he had taken a great fancy, "let me know. I'll fix it for you."

Bob laughed, but he was young enough to be flattered by the sincere compliment.

"I may take you up on that some day," he said. "Who knows?"

Then MacDonald stepped into the canoe, goodbyes were said, and the craft shot away.

"There go a couple of good men," commented Farnum, as under the powerful strokes of the paddles the canoe drew swiftly down the lake.

"One good man, anyhow," said Art, who overheard the observation. "Ol' Dick an' me had a li'l talk. I'm going to join up with the Mounted, too, when we git back. We been pals fifteen year."

"Fifteen years," exclaimed Frank. "In the wilderness all that time?"

Art nodded absently, his eyes on the retreating canoe.

"Sure," said Art. "It's home to us. Ain't no wilderness. Cities is the real wilderness. Dick an' me's been separated now and then, like now, but we

always come together agin. I expect when we git to be old men like some prospectors I seen we'll be together all the time, fightin' and jawin' each other, but ready to tear the heart out o' anybody that jumps one of us."

"It's a wonder Dick went off with MacDonald like he did, in that case," said Jack.

"Huh. Somebody had to go. He knew we'd meet agin."

Art said no more, but turned away to busy himself with the outfit.

Presently everything was in readiness for departure and then the two remaining canoes, with the outfit distributed between them, the three boys in one and the three men in the other, started up the lake in the opposite direction from that taken by MacDonald and Dick. Previously, when in pursuit of Lupo, Mr. Hampton had discovered the lake was of so considerable extent that, despite their hours of travel up the side, they had been unable to discern the farther end. In fact, the lake broadened out considerably some distance beyond the island. It was his intention, inasmuch as it followed the general northeastward direction they would pursue, to stick to it as long as possible. He believed there would be some stream at the farther end sufficiently large to float their canoes.

In this he was not mistaken, for after four hours

of steady paddling, they discerned the outlet of a stream of considerable width, quartered across the lake and entered it. Almost immediately Jack called to his father, in surprise:

"Dad! Oh, Dad! This stream flows out of the lake; not into it. Do you notice?"

The leading canoe slowed up while the boys approached.

"It certainly does, Jack," said his father. "What do you make of it, Farnum?"

The latter shook his head, puzzled.

"I don't know," he said. "You must remember this is unexplored country. We're liable to find anything here. But, maybe——"

"What?"

"I don't know. We're near the Coppermine, aren't we, Art?"

"Figure we must be."

"Maybe this stream flows into the Coppermine."

"I'll bet that's it," Art approved. "The waters of that lake empty into the Coppermine. Yes, sir; I'll bet that's what it is. Well, that makes travel easy for awhile, anyhow."

Two days of travel, unbroken by any but routine incidents such as the occasional shooting of wild duck or geese, brought the party at camping time at the end of the second day to a pleasant, open, grassy

prairie between two low-wooded hills. Here it was decided to make camp.

After the evening meal was over, and while Mr. Hampton, who was feeling out of sorts, retired to his little tent to try and sleep without taking part in the usual desultory conversation about the fire—which was kept going for the companionship and cheer it imparted and not from any need of warmth you may be sure—Jack arose and stretched.

"My legs are stiff from that position in the canoe all day," he said. "I want to stretch them a bit. Who'll come with me to the top of that nearest hill? The sun is pretty low, but we ought to get a considerable view."

Bob and Frank both volunteered to accompany him. Farnum sat, smoking his pipe and staring into the fire absently. He didn't care to go. But Art arose and joined the party. It was not far to the top of the hill, although a stiff climb through the trees and brush. The crest, however, was bare of timber.

Frank, who lighter than the others, was first to reach the top, stood struck with amazement. He turned to beckon the others forward with one hand, while laying the other over his mouth in a gesture enjoining silence.

"For the love o' Pete," whispered Art, eyes bulging, as he stood beside Frank and peered down into

the grassy vale beyond, half overgrown with young willows.

"Are they caribou?" asked Jack, low-voiced. "They don't look like the caribou we've run across along the streams."

"They ain't, neither," said Art. "They're reindeer."

"Must be Santy Claus's," chuckled Bob. "Always did believe there was something to that story about the old boy living up here near the North Pole, even though people insisted on calling it a fairy tale. Now I know."

His joke was ignored, however, as Art continued:

"Yes, sir, reindeer. Caribou are always brown. Some o' these are white, some brown, and some spotted. Then they ain't the size o' caribou. Besides, I know they're reindeer. I see 'em often enough in Alaska to know."

"Alaska? Do these reindeer come from there?"

Art nodded.

"Look at 'em. They're tame. Must'a winded us, but that don't scare 'em none. They're used to humans. No more scared o' bein' hunted than cattle are back in the States."

"Tame?" queried Frank. "What do you mean?"

"Why, the Eskimos in Alaska, not the wild ones of this Far North, but the regular ones that come in touch with the white man, they keep herds o' rein-

deer just like a farmer in the States keeps cows. Look at 'em. Must be two-three hundred there right now. They're eight-ten hundred miles from home, too. Must'a wandered away. Bet you there's a desprit Eskimo lookin' for 'em right now."

Jack looked thoughtful.

"What a shame for a man to lose a big herd like that," he said.

"Yes, sir," affirmed Art emphatically. "Must be six-seven thousaund dollars worth o' tame reindeer there. Pretty tough."

"We can't do anything about it, though," said Bob.

"Seems a pity-like we can't ride herd on 'em till some Eskimo shows up to claim 'em," said Art. "But it can't be done. Yore father, Jack, is all for pushin' on fast as we kin."

After some further discussion, the party retraced its steps, with Art explaining to the boys the big difference existing between the semi-civilized Eskimos of Alaska and the little that was known of the wild Eskimos of the Arctic.

"Folks think Alaska's right up next to the North Pole," he said. "Leastways folks in the States do. People comin' to Nome from the States every so often give me that knowledge. But they're shore mistaken. Alaska's great country that'll be settled up some day. Shore, we got hard Winters. But

boys, in the Summer, with the sun a-shinin' all the time, everything grows just three times as fast as in the States. My Pap was a farmer back in York State, an' I was raised on a farm. We had hard scratchin' an' our Winters was long an' hard, too. An' we didn't have Summers like in Alaska to make up for 'em. I'll bet if my Pap were livin' today an' farmin' in Alaska he'd find life a lot easier than what we had it on the old farm."

"But why don't more people live in Alaska, then?" asked Frank.

"Oh, I don't know. Hard to get to, for one thing. Ain't developed up with railroads, neither. Some day, though, you'll see 'em forced to come here, the way they're a-crowdin' up down in the States. Why, we got only 60,000 people in all Alaska, yet she's quarter as big as the States an' could darn near feed the whole push herself, if she was put to it and farmed right."

"Art, why don't you go to farming? I'd think that would be the thing for you to do."

"Mebbe I will some day," said Art. "But I'm an old batch. Got no wife, an' kind o' like to feel free to knock around instead o' bein' tied to one place."

It was a feeling with which the boys could sympathize. They were young, with life ahead of them, and they wanted to see the world. In fact they

had seen a good deal of it already, as those who have followed them through their various adventures, know. Of this they spoke as they made their way back to camp, where they discovered Farnum ready to turn in, and merely awaiting their return before doing so. Since their first encounter with Lupo, and their discovery that they were not alone in the wilderness, a watch was always kept, and Farnum had combatted sleepiness in order to keep guard until their return.

"Art, you've got the first watch," he said, when they appeared. "The rest of you better turn in, and not sit up talking. With luck we ought to make the Coppermine tomorrow, I figure, and then we'll do some traveling. We've got to hit a fast pace from now on, for already we are having real twilight, and pretty soon we'll be having short nights while the sun dips entirely below the horizon. That means the season is growing short, and we have not got much time left before we'll have to start for the outside."

Jack and Bob heeded the injunction and followed Farnum's example shortly, but Frank, who did not feel sleepy and, moreover, loved to talk, sat up a considerable time gossipping with Art and telling him of some of their previous adventures.

Suddenly, as he talked along, low-voiced so as

not disturb the nearby sleepers, Frank noticed Art was not paying attention, and stopped.

"Oh, well," he said, half petulantly, "if I'm boring you——"

Art leaned close, and laid a hand on his arm.

"Sorry, Frank," he said, in a whisper, "but I was a-listenin.' I got a strange feelin' like as if somebody had his eyes on the back a' my head. I wasn't payin' no attention to you but a-listenin' to see if I could hear anything."

He was so intense that he communicated some of his trepidation to Frank. Instinctively, the latter reached for his rifle as Art half stood up to peer at their twilit surroundings. They were camped in a tiny grove of a half dozen spruces, like an islet in a midst of long, matted grass.

As Art stood up, a single shot rang out, shattering the stillness. He threw himself prone, dragging Frank down with him. Then a fusillade was poured in on them, seemingly from all sides.

CHAPTER XVII.

SURPRISED.

"WATCH my back, Frank. Keep low behind that nearest tree and let 'em have it. They're in that long grass."

As he spoke Art, worming his way rapidly forward to a position behind the trunk of one of the spruces, began firing rapidly.

Frank, in the opposite direction, fired several shots into the long grass. He had an uncanny feeling, for he could see no forms at which to fire, and the preliminary volley poured into the camp was not repeated, so he had no index as to the enemy positions.

Jack, Bob and Farnum, rolled over, awakened by the shots, but Frank called fiercely: "Keep down."

Realizing something of the situation, the three grabbed their rifles, laying by their sides, and, keeping down, prepared to fire as soon as they could see something at which to aim.

Mr. Hampton stirred in his tent a moment later. He had been sleeping hard, and had not awakened instantly as had the other. Moreover, a dull ache gripped his head, preventing him from thinking clearly and from comprehending instantly what was occurring. He lay a moment, wondering what had awakened him. All was still outside, for Frank and Art had ceased firing to await some sign from the unseen enemy. Mr. Hampton decided to peer out and investigate what had disturbed him. He crawled from his dog tent and stood up.

At his appearance, a ragged volley burst once more from the long grass surrounding the tiny grove, for his figure stood forth clearly and made an excellent target. Spinning about, Mr. Hampton fell heavily to the ground.

A wild yell of triumph went up at this indication that the leader had been hit. Jack leaped up regardless of consequences and ran to his father, dragging him into the tent, while bullets whipped around him. Bob ran to his assistance. To the hidden enemy it must have seemed as if their opponents were demoralized. At any rate, they grew more courageous, and started a rush.

From three sides, it came, the figures of the oncoming men only partially seen as they crouched low and darted through the grass. But the long stems waving above them marked their paths, and

there were three still on watch who would have to be dealt with.

Frank, Art and Farnum marked where the waving grass indicated the enemy. Each guarded a side of the little grove. On the fourth side lay the stream.

"Wait'll they're close, fellows, then give it to 'em," cautioned Farnum. "Ready. Let's go."

The three repeating rifles spoke as one, and from the long grass came howls and shrieks of pain and terror. What followed was brief but lively. Each of the three pumped his rifle as fast as possible, and the bullets poured into the grass almost as fast as if sprayed from the throat of a machine gun. The return fire was heavy but high, whipping through the branches of the spruce trees overhead.

Reinforcements added to the strength of the defenders, for Bob darted out of the tent, crouched over, and flung himself beside Frank, beginning to shoot even as he talked.

"Mr. Hampton escaped by a miracle," he said. "Bullet creased his head and stunted him. He'll be all right."

The rush was broken. Whoever was in the grass, feared to advance farther in the face of that fire. The long grass ceased to wave, indicating the attackers had come to a halt. But they did not retreat. The menace was still there.

"Anybody hit?" Farnum called out.

"Not me," said Art.

"Nor me," answered Frank.

"Thank our lucky stars for that," answered Farnum.

They all lay in a semi-circle, facing different directions, but close enough to each other to make communication in ordinary tones possible. Relieved to discover that all were untouched, despite the bullets that had rained on the camp, Farnum next inquired anxiously after Mr. Hampton, and Bob answered he had been only stunned.

"I reckon these fellows are Lupo and his gang," Farnum remarked. "But he must have had more men than we expected, or he wouldn't be attacking us like this."

"What'll we do?" growled Art. "Looks like they got us penned in."

"Oh, but we stopped their rush," protested Frank.

"Yes," said Art, "but they ain't beatin' it as I can see. An' when we want to up an' leave camp, what's goin' to happen?"

Frank was about to reply, when Bob who was beside him, pointed with his rifle toward the gap beween the two hills, from the top of one of which they earlier had seen the reindeer herd in the next valley.

"Look there, Frank," he exclaimed excitedly. "What do you make of that?"

"Where? I don't—— Oh, yes; now I see. Something moving."

"Sure is something moving," Bob said.

Already the short twilight was beginning to lighten, as the sun after its dip to the edge of the northern horizon now swung higher.

"Bob."

"What?"

"I believe that's the reindeer herd."

"From that valley over the hill? The reindeer we saw when we were up there on the hill top?"

"Yes, sir."

"But how in the world?"

"Why, I noticed that the other valley swung around between those two little hills. The reindeer are just grazing along, hunting new pasture. And, say, Bob!"

"Well, what now?"

"I've got a bully idea."

Abruptly, Frank wormed his way around to face Art on his right, who was keeping watch against surprise on his side of the little clump of trees sheltering them.

"Art," said he, "look over there, between those two little hills. Are those reindeer? The reindeer we saw from the hilltop?"

"Reckon so," said Art, after a critical inspection.

"Well, Art, can reindeer be stampeded? Like cattle, I mean."

"Reckon so. Why?"

"Well, I'm going to try it," Frank declared in a determined tone. Still prone, he began to wriggle out of his clothes, and pulling up his legs, to unlace his boots and kick them off.

"Are you crazy, Frank?" Bob demanded, puzzled, while Art and Farnum took their eyes from the coverts ahead to look at Frank in astonishment.

"Crazy? No more than usual," Frank replied, as he completed disrobing, and now lay naked under the spreading branches of the spruce. "But I'm going to slip into the water and float down to that hill, then get in behind the reindeer and stampede them. You see what'll happen then, don't you?"

Bob stared at his companion, wide-eyed. Dawning comprehension crept into his eyes, and he began to smile. Then he chuckled.

"You little hound," he said, employing a pet expression among the boys, denoting admiration.

"But, say, what's the idea?" demanded Art sharply, from his position several yards away.

Frank had started wriggling forward, and waited until he was close to Art and Farnum before replying. Then he repeated his assertion that he intended floating downstream until behind the slow-

moving herd of reindeer, when he would land and attempt to stampede them.

"You see how it is," he said. "You yourselves admit that we're in a tight place. Lupo's forces have cover in that long grass, and can wait us out. Here among the trees there is no grass to hide us. The minute we get up and start to move around, we expose ourselves. Therefore, the best thing to do, is to drive them out of their cover, isn't it?"

"Sure," said Art. "But how you going to do it with——"

He was about to ask how Frank intended to drive their enemies from cover by stampeding the reindeer, but Frank grinned at him, and he paused. Dawning comprehension came into his eyes, too.

"That's it," Frank said. "I see you get my idea."

He turned his gaze toward Farnum, farthest from the center, but who had overheard the conversation.

"You see, Mr. Farnum," he said, "when the reindeer come dashing down, Lupo's men will have to run for it to get out of the way. A stampeding herd isn't anything to monkey with, I expect. Then you'll have your chance. But the reindeer won't dash in among these few close-set trees, so you'll be safe. No, sir; as I figure it, they'll just head right on past here and try to get through the hills beyond."

Farnum's glance approved.

"A fine idea," he said, but then he added in a tone of doubt: "I don't know as I ought to let you go, though. Mr. Hampton wouldn't like it, maybe, putting yourself into danger like that."

"Oh, nonsense," said Frank. "I can slip unseen into the water. And I can swim like a seal. Ask Bob."

And at once, to prevent any interruption of his plans, he resumed worming his way to the bank of the river.

The river ran at this point between six-foot banks, and the clump of trees in which camp was situated, stood so close to the water that the roots of several projected through the soil of the land. Frank had little difficulty in getting down to the water, and felt sure that he accomplished the feat unseen by the enemy. He let himself into the stream, which was of sufficient depth right up to the bank to enable him to float downstream under the protection of the high bank, without the necessity of wading out to get to deeper water.

"For God's sake, be careful, boy," whispered Farnum, as Frank disappeared.

Frank was naked, and unarmed except for a long knife. He had not figured out how he would set about stampeding the reindeer. He was leaving that to chance. What concerned him now was to get to

a position behind the herd without discovery. He stuck close inshore, floating, his eyes roving along the edge of the bluff above him for signs of the enemy.

None was to be seen. After all, he thought, it was hardly likely that any of the enemy lay in hiding here, as none of the shots fired at them had come from so close to the river. On the contrary, the enemy lay inland, showing they had come upon the camp from the landward side. Becoming bolder, therefore, he turned over and struck out, swimming strongly, the long knife in a sheath at his belt. He felt for it several times, to reassure himself it was there and had not fallen out.

Frank was a strong swimmer. Indeed, this was the one athletic sport at which he excelled both Bob and Jack, although they, too, were excellent swimmers. It did not take him long, therefore, aided by the current, to come abreast of the trees clothing the first of the two hills between which the reindeer had entered their valley. The hill sloped abruptly down to the water, and Frank had marked from camp how trees clothed it entirely, even dipping into the stream. When he had passed, as he believed, beyond a point at which there was any possibility of his being seen, he seized a branch of a willow tree and pulled himself ashore. Then, after climbing a short distance up the hill, he began working his way around it

through the trees. Presently he was on the hillside facing the valley where were his friends in the distant clump of trees, and the enemy hidden in the long grass. The reindeer had not moved far. They were only a short distance from him, and Frank hurried forward at the best pace he could command.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STAMPEDE.

For the first time since starting on his wild project, a doubt as to its success entered Frank's mind. But he put it resolutely aside as he sped forward, crouching, sliding under the low branches, determined to make the best speed possible. His companions were in a ticklish situation. He wanted to do what he could to relieve them as soon as possible. As to his own danger, he gave it not a thought.

What worried Frank was the possibility that he would be unable to stampede the reindeer herd. This was the thought which he put aside. But it kept recurring. And when he had come into position behind the herd, and saw them feeding quietly below him, not a stone's throw away, at the foot of the hill, where the trees ended abruptly and the grassy plain began, he was still without an idea as to what to do.

Originally, he had thought that stoning the herd

might set them into motion and stampede them forward. But doubt as to the workability of that method had seized him as he first climbed from the water and, from among the trees, obtained his first view of the herd. The animals, grazing quietly, were so well spread out that he feared stoning them would not alarm them sufficiently to start a stampede.

"Well, here goes for a try, anyway," he muttered to himself.

Fortunately, there were numerous pieces of rock lying about. Collecting a heap of these, he began pelting away at the nearest reindeer, a brown and white spotted cow. His aim was good, and the startled animal, struck on the flank, snorted, tossed her head and gave a little jump. She went forward only a step or two, however, and then settled down to grazing again.

Once more Frank let fly, and this time the stone caught her on the side of the neck. She tossed her head angrily, and sidled forward again. The movement brought her sharply into contact with another cow, and for a moment Frank was filled with hope that the pair would start fighting and alarm the rest of the herd. He was disappointed. The first cow sheered away from the other, and both resumed grazing.

What should he do now? Frank was perplexed. He had already considered the possibility of startling

the reindeer by shouting at them, but had given up that idea because it would apprise the hidden enemy in the grass ahead of his presence. He wanted them to know nothing of the menace in their rear until the stampeded herd should sweep down upon them.

"I wonder——" he said, muttering the words for the comfort of hearing his own voice.

Then he fell silent, thinking. Art had said they were tame reindeer, accustomed to the presence of man. Yes, but of man clothed and in his natural state. And of Eskimos at that—men dressed a good deal differently from the way in which he ordinarily clothed himself. What would those reindeer think if they saw a naked, white body dash down upon them suddenly?

"I'll do it," he said. That's the only way. And it will work, too, I'll bet."

Drawing his long knife from the sheath, he looked around and selected a tough branch the thickness of his thumb. This he cut off, stripped from it the projecting twigs, and made of it a long, pliant whip.

Whip in one hand, knife in the other, eyes gleaming and determined, Frank made his way to the edge of the trees, and then stole out into the long grass, crouching low. He did not want the reindeer to see him until he was upon them, and as they were grazing away from him, this was not so difficult.

In fact, he was within several yards of a clump of cows before one swung about and looked at him.

The minute that occurred, Frank realized there was no longer any possibility of concealment, and that the time had come to strike. And strike he did. Jumping to his feet, he bounded forward, swinging his whip so that it sank through the air.

Bringing the whip down with a cruel lash on the flank of the nearest reindeer, Frank swung it around on all sides. Every swing landed. The swish as the pliant green wood struck the animals reminded him oddly of the sound of a stick beating rugs at home. Many a time he had heard that same thud-thud from behind his house.

Not a sound did he make as he lashed about him, for he felt that if no sound indicating that he was human came from him, the consternation of the reindeer would be increased.

And that he had not miscalculated became at once apparent, for the reindeer near him lifted up their sharp little hooves and sprang to get out of the vicinity of this strange animal with the lash. Naturally, to escape him, there was only one way for them to go, and that was forward, so forward they went. Right into the main body of the herd they dashed, with Frank prancing and bounding behind them, with each leap bringing his whip down upon the flank of a laggard.

Suddenly, one reindeer, nearer than the rest, dashed by so close on his right as to brush Frank. He was not being charged. The animal was panicky, and merely seeking to escape. But he had to leap nimbly aside to avoid being bowled over. And as he leaped, the long knife clutched in his hand pricked the animal's flank.

The reindeer screamed, a shrill, terror-stricken cry, and launched itself forward like a thunderbolt into the midst of the disturbed herd. That, apparently, was all that was needed to complete the impending panic. Frank's inexperienced eye could not have told the composition of the herd, but Art, when they had first caught sight of the reindeer from the hilltop, had pointed out the majority were cows, and the bucks numbered only a handful. If any buck had a masculine curiosity to discover what this strange white-skinned animal that looked so like and yet so unlike a man was, he did not get the chance to gratify it. For the now thoroughly frightened cows started forward in a rush that would have overborne any animal foolish enough to try to stem it.

And then Frank did what might have been considered a foolish thing. Carried away by the enthusiasm engendered by seeing his plan to stampede the herd work out successfully, he continued to bound along behind, at first able to whip the

bunched-up stragglers, but soon falling hopelessly behind as the herd picked up speed and swept forward like the wind.

Straight toward the clump of trees sheltering Frank's friends dashed the reindeer. And an exultant throb filled his breast. For the hidden enemy lay in the long grass between the herd and the trees, and inevitably, therefore, the stampeding animals would drive them out.

Regardless of the risk to himself, Frank continued on his way, running as fast as the nature of the ground permitted. The herd beat the long grass flat in its advance, as flat as if a great board had been pressed down on all, and the going was easier than he had looked for.

Suddenly a shot rang out, then another, and a little wisp of smoke showed the young fellow the discharge came from the trees. His own friends were shooting. At what? Again an exultant thrill swept over him. He felt certain his friends were firing at the enemy, and that the stampeding herd was driving the latter ahead of it, although because of the presence of the animals between himself and the enemy he could not see whether such was the case.

That Frank's surmise was correct, however, was soon borne out. For the first shots fired from the

trees were succeeded by a rapid rattle that told him everybody was in action.

Then followed a confused medley of shots interspersed with shouts and cries, and Frank, pausing a moment to peer ahead and listen came to the conclusion that the enemy was desperately shooting at the reindeer in an effort to turn the herd aside. If that was the case, however, their efforts were unsuccessful, for the animals filled with the unreasoning spirit of panic did not swerve from their course.

"By golly," Frank exclaimed aloud, "I believe I can reach camp all right."

And once more he began to run forward. For it seemed to him that the herd, sweeping the enemy before it, would leave the ground free for him to reach the clump of trees and rejoin his friends.

On swept the herd, and on ran Frank in the beaten down grass behind it. His eyes were strained towards the trees. He began to wave and shout, as he came closer and made out the outline of Mr. Hampton's tent. He paid no attention to his surroundings.

Then a form rose up from the long grass beside the swathe beaten down by the reindeer, there was a shot, and Frank fell forward on his face, a buzzing in his ears, and lost consciousness.

CHAPTER XIX.

LUPO'S END.

WHEN next Frank opened his eyes, he lay on a blanket in camp and the sight of Bob and Jack bending anxiously above him while Mr. Hampton and Farnum worked at his shoulder greeted him.

"Hello," he said, trying to grin, but wincing as a sharp stab of pain passed through his shoulder.

"Don't move, Frank, We'll have you fixed up right in a minute," said Mr. Hampton soothingly.

"Is it bad, Dad," Jack anxiously inquired.

"Just grazed the bone," said Mr. Hampton, putting the finishing touches to the bandage, and straightening up. "There, Frank, now you'll be all right."

"What happened to me?" asked Frank, struggling to a sitting position, and finding his right arm bound across his chest.

"Bullet through your shoulder brought you down," said Mr. Hampton. "And your head struck a rock hidden in the grass, so you were knocked out."

"Good enough," said Frank, "but who shot me? I was dashing along, yelling to attract your attention, and never knew what hit me."

"I guess you didn't," said Jack. "If it hadn't been for Art, you might have been finished. But he shot down the fellow that winged you."

"Yes, and your two pals ran out as if there wasn't an enemy in sight and carried you in," said Art, as he saw Frank about to thank him. "Give your gratitude to them."

Frank smiled.

"I guess I owe it to you all," he said.

"You were foolish to follow the reindeer herd so closely, Frank," said Mr. Hampton, reprovingly. "Unarmed, too."

"Well, I was stampeding 'em, Mr. Hampton," said Frank. "I couldn't do that, you know, without being there."

The older man shook his head.

"If I had been myself, Frank, I wouldn't have let you take that chance," he said. "No, Farnum," he hastened to add, "I'm not criticizing you. When these boys take it in their heads to do something it's hard to head them off. However, it all turned out for the best."

"Tell me about it," Frank said. "How did my scheme work out?"

"Couldn't have been better, old thing," said Bob.

"Lupo's men ran like rabbits when those reindeer swept down on them. They tried a few shots in an attempt to head them off, but seeing the uselessness of their efforts, turned and ran. We gave them a few shots to help them on their way. We counted nine."

"And they got away?"

"All but the man Art shot," said Jack. "The fellow who shot at you. And you haven't heard who he was."

Jack's eyes were bright. Frank looked at him questioningly.

"Not——"

"Yes," said Jack. "It was Lupo himself. Art wounded him in the chest. He died before we could do anything for him. But Dad got some information from him first."

He looked at his father. Mr. Hampton's face was both grim and sad.

"Yes, Frank," he said. "We learned who set these men on us, and who plotted against Thorwaldsson. But let us not discuss it now. It's bad business all the way through."

Mr. Hampton turned aside, taking Farnum with him, and the two fell into a low-toned discussion. Bob and Jack, meanwhile, helped Frank to resume his clothing which still lay where he had discarded

it before taking to the river. Art busied himself at packing up the camp equipment.

Presently, the two older men called Art to them and, after a few words of discussion, rejoined the boys.

"Boys," said Mr. Hampton, "we want your opinions on this, too."

"On what, Dad?"

"Well, we saw nine men go bounding off away from the reindeer, and we accounted for Lupo. That makes ten, and it doesn't seem likely there were more. Yet there is the bare possibility that out there in the grass may be one or more badly wounded men, fellows whom we shot at one time or another, who were too hard hit to escape. If there are any such, we can't go off and leave them there to die. I wouldn't treat a dog like that."

"They're not dogs," muttered Farnum, bitterly. "They're wolves."

"Mr. Farnum considers we would be taking too great a risk," Mr. Hampton continued. "He says that if we go out to search for wounded, we are likely to be shot for our pains."

"Oh, surely not by a wounded man whom you were going to help," protested Jack.

"You don't know them," said Farnum.

"Well, just the same," said Jack, "I think Dad is

right. It would be shameful for us to go away without investigating."

"I'd feel like a murderer," said Bob. "Shooting 'em down in a fight is one thing. It was their lives or ours. But leaving a wounded man to die in the wilderness is something entirely different."

Farnum made a gesture of surrender.

"I guess I seem hard-hearted," he said. "But you don't know what I've been through in the past. All right, we'll make a search. But I warn you to be on guard."

"Hardly likely after all that there are any wounded out there," remarked Frank, taking part in the discussion for the first time. "They must have been in hiding right in the path of the reindeer, and you can't see any forms there now. If there were any too badly wounded to escape, they'd also have been too badly wounded to drag themselves to the side."

Mr. Hampton nodded.

"The grass is so beaten down, too," he said, "that if there were anybody out there, we could see him. However, I cannot rest easy without making a search. Now, you three boys remain in camp and keep watch. The rest of us will take care of the search."

To this the boys made no objection. As a matter of fact, it was one time that exclusion from activity

did not irritate them. They had no stomach for what they might discover. Frank and Jack, especially, thinking of the terrible affair on the island in the lake, kept silence. Bob protested, but more as a matter of form and because he considered manliness demanded it, than otherwise.

Mr. Hampton shook his head.

"None of us want to do this, Bob," he said. "It has to be done, however. But I certainly don't want you boys along."

The three men, revolvers clasped in their hands for use in case of emergency, set out, while the boys watched from the trees. Keeping close together, they quartered the plain, going far beyond the beaten down stretch of grass left by the passing of the reindeer herd. Presently, the boys saw them return, and with a sigh of relief, Jack said:

"Well, thank goodness, that's over."

Mr. Hampton's spirits were considerably higher on his return, as the boys could see by his features.

"Nobody anywhere," he reported, "and we made a thorough search, too."

"More thorough than there was need for," said Farnum, grumpily.

Mr. Hampton smiled slightly. On long trips into the wilderness, where men are thrown into intimate contact every hour of the day and night, they get to know each other better than would be the case

through a lifetime of association under ordinary circumstances. It was so here. Mr. Hampton had come to love the silent, capable Farnum. Behind the latter's bitter hatred of Lupo and his like, the easterner knew there was some good reason. He sensed a tragedy in Farnum's past, about which, perhaps, the other would some day speak in a moment of confidence. And he forgave the man's seeming brutality accordingly.

"All right, everybody," said Mr. Farnum, cheerily. "Let's pack up and be on our way."

Thanks to Art's previous preparations, the business of breaking camp was speedily concluded, and the party embarked in the canoes and once more got under way. Farnum and Art both considered that, because of Frank's wounded shoulder and his inability to paddle, Art should take his place in the canoe with Bob and Jack while Frank went with Mr. Hampton and Farnum. But to this arangement the boys protested vigorously, and Mr. Hampton settled the matter by supporting them.

"Bob and Jack are splendid canoeists," he said. "They have given plenty of evidence of that on this trip, and at home they are always in the water when they aren't flying. No, let Frank stay with them. They don't like to be separated."

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE FOG.

ANOTHER period of uneventful canoe travel followed, corresponding in time to the passage of a day, although there was nothing to mark the lapse except the slightly-deepened twilight preceding the re-ascension of the sun. Camp was pitched on an island in the stream which was small and compact and could be easily defended in case attack on them was renewed.

Of the latter contingency, however, Mr. Hampton felt there was little danger. With Lupo gone, the rascals composing his party would no longer be held to their purpose, and start to make their way out of the wilderness and back to their accustomed haunts.

When travel was resumed after an undisturbed camp, everybody felt rested and in a more cheerful frame of mind.

"We ought to be reaching the Coppermine soon," Farnum exclaimed, as they set out.

His words were prophetic, because at the end of

two hours, on rounding a bend, they discerned not far ahead a broad and rapid river, into which emptied the stream they had been following.

"The Coppermine beyond a doubt," said Farnum.

In this diagnosis, Mr. Hampton and Art agreed. And, before long, all question of doubt was conclusively settled by the discovery of great rocks of a dull reddish color lining the banks. These were the copper deposits from which the river took its name.

"Sometime, when the transportation problem has been solved, this region will be supplying copper to the world," Mr. Hampton observed.

The canoe containing the boys was close alongside, as the older men had let their paddles swing idly to enable Bob and Jack to catch up with them.

"Why can't it be taken out now, Dad?" asked Jack.

"Because," explained Mr. Hampton, "the only method would be by ship through the Arctic, and even in the short Summer that is a passage often blocked by ice. No, development of the copper resources of this wilderness, as well as of the oil we hope to find, will have to wait on the building of a railroad."

"But ice and snow will block the railroad."

"Not nearly to the same extent," Mr. Hampton said. "Throughout the Summer, such a road could

be in continuous operation. Even in Winter, with properly designed equipment, the road could be kept open—perhaps. That, however, is doubtful, for of the continuous severity of Winter here you boys can have no conception."

"Well, if we don't turn back soon, they'll get some idea of it, all right," said Farnum, grimly.

"You mean we'll be caught by Winter before we can get out?" asked Mr. Hampton.

"When the old North Pole starts sliding south, she slides fast," said Farnum, sententiously.

As if spurred by the specter of approaching Winter, all dug their paddles into the stream with renewed vigor, and the two canoes swept on between the dismal, rocky banks hour after hour.

That night there was real twilight, and a sharpness in the air to which the party was not accustomed. Art pointed skyward, as he and the boys worked at building the campfire. Their gaze followed whither he indicated.

"The moon," he said. "Sure sign the season's getting late. That's the first time you could see it real good."

"How late in the Summer is it, anyway?" asked Frank. "I, for one, have kept no track of time. And I don't see how anybody else could with the continuous daylight we have had."

"Dad religiously checks off the days every twenty-four hours," said Jack. "I've seen him do it."

Over the evening meal, Mr. Hampton explained that from Long Tom, the Indian they had taken captive on the island in the lake, he had gotten directions as to where the latter believed Thorwaldsson and his men to be. The explorer, according to Long Tom, was making his way along the Coppermine, in an endeavor to get out to the south before caught by the Winter. He had started late, and in all likelihood, Mr. Hampton's party was still to the south of Thorwaldsson.

"From now on, however," said Mr. Hampton, "we must keep our eyes open as we proceed for any signs along the way which would indicate Thorwaldsson already had passed, going south. Not that I consider that to be likely, however," he added. "On the contrary, if Long Tom wasn't lying, and I believe he was telling the truth, Thorwaldsson should be close at hand, and we ought soon to encounter him."

Camp again was uneventful, but when the boys awoke in the morning they found a thick wet fog over all. Their blankets were wet with it, the rocks were wet, and the river which had lain spread out before them under the moonlight when they turned in for the night, now could not be seen. Only a gray wall of fog greeted them, blurring the outlines

even of Mr. Hampton, Farnum and Art, who stood in anxious conversation.

When the boys joined their elders, they found the question up for discussion was the question of whether to proced or remain where they were until the fog lifted.

"We've had unexampled good weather so far, Mr. Hampton," said Farnum. "But this fog may mark the breaking-up. We may be in for it from now on."

"I realize all that," Mr. Hampton said, his slight impatience mute evidence to Jack, at least, that his Father was worried. "What I'd like to know now, is whether to move on or wait till the fog lifts."

"Why not move on, Dad?" asked Jack.

"Oh, you boys up, hey? Well, for one thing, if we travel in this fog we run the danger of being caught in rapids and sucked forward before being able to reach the bank. For another, we might—just might—pass Thorwaldsson, in the fog, without knowing it. He might be travelling, too."

After some further discussion, it was decided the party should remain until the fog lifted, and that all should be on guard to catch any sound of movement out of the fog which would indicate somebody, presumably Thorwaldsson, was passing. Following breakfast, in fact, all but Mr. Hampton, who remained in camp, as a guide in case the others blun-

dered and lost their way in the fog, took up positions along the bank of the river, some twenty yards apart to maintain "listening posts."

An hour passed, and then another, with no indication that the fog was thinning out, and with no sound coming to straining ears except the lap of the water along the rocks at their feet. It was nerve-trying work in a way, to sit there for so long a period, isolated, as if entirely alone in an unpeopled world. The boys, at their various stations, felt the strain considerably, more so, indeed, than did Farnum or Art who were old hands at the wilderness game.

In assigning all their stations, Mr. Hampton had decided, because of the greater experience of the two older men, that they should take up their positions at the south end of the line. If any party southbound along the Coppermine escaped the attention of the boys, Farnum and Art would be pretty likely to remedy the oversight.

To Bob fell the most northerly position. And, as he sat there, hunched up on a rock, staring out into that thick greasy wall of mist, he felt, if anything, more lonely than his companions. Jack and Frank, at least, had the consolation of knowing there was someone to either side. But, with none of his friends beyond him on the north, Bob felt very much alone, indeed.

All sorts of reflections entered his mind, reflections that had no bearing whatsoever on the situation in which he found himself. He thought of sunny days on Long Island, of flights in his airplanes or zipping trips along the coast in his speed boat. He thought of one thing and another, classroom, Mexican mountains, that strange city of another world found immured in the Andes, and—of Marjorie. Ever since his first meeting with his sister's friend, Miss Faulkner, she had occupied a position of growing importance in Bob's scheme of things. Someday——

"Some girl," Bob said to himself. "I'll have to see more of her."

He leaned forward, elbows planted on his knees, eyes staring into the fog. In reality, his thoughts, as can be seen, were far, far away. But presently, a sound, muffled and faint, pierced his consciousness and he sprang into instant alertness. He listened, holding his breath, straining to hear.

It came again.

Bob started on a stumbling run for Jack, the first man to the south.

CHAPTER XXI.

A WAILING CRY.

"JACK, Jack," he shouted, as he ran through the fog, blindly, but remembering to veer away from the river bank a little to avoid the danger of tumbling in. "Jack, Jack, where are you?"

A shadow, fog-distorted, loomed before him, big, enormous. A hand gripped his shoulder and brought him to a halt.

"Here I am, Bob. What's the matter?"

Bob rubbed the back of a big hand across his eyes.

"I heard something out there," he said, pointing into the fog upon the river. "I guess I'd been asleep, or day-dreaming, anyway. I couldn't be sure I had heard anything. It came twice—that sound. Then there was silence. So I came down here to ask whether you had heard, too."

"But, Bob, what was it? What did you hear? I heard nothing."

"Jack, it was the sound of a baby's cry."

Bob's voice was solemn. A shiver ran through

Jack, as if a breath of cold air had fanned him. In that fog-enwrapped isolation, in that far northern wilderness, what could a baby be doing? It was preposterous. More, it was uncanny.

"Bob, you were asleep. Yes, sir, you certainly were dreaming. A baby. Huh."

"Maybe so," Bob said, relunctantly. "But, true as I live, Jack——"

The other's grip on his shoulder tightened.

Out of the fog came a wailing sound, distant, thin, but unmistakable. It was the cry of a baby, if ever there was such a thing.

But this time it came not from the river, but from inland. The two listened, straining to hear, but the cry died away without being repeated. They looked at each other, an unnamable fear gripping them.

"Jack, I'm afraid," confessed Bob in a whisper. "I don't know—there's something strikes a chill into me—I—I——"

He paused. Jack nodded.

"I feel the same way, Bob," he said, low-voiced. "What a pair of fools we are, though," he added, brightening. "That must be some bird, or animal, perhaps."

Almost unconsciously, they had been making their way southward and now another figure rose up in the fog before them—that of Frank. He was about to speak, when once more the wailing cry rose, and

this time it came from two quarters, from the river and from farther inland. The three stood, silent, speechless, and in that moment, while the echoes of the cries still rang in their heads, Farnum and Art materialized out of the fog.

"Good, there you all are," said Farnum, in a low, tense voice. "Follow me to camp."

And without a word of explanation he started at right angles away from the river, for they had taken their stations in such fashion that Frank, holding the middle position, would be directly opposite the camp. This was in order to enable them to reach it without losing their way in the fog.

"What is it, Art?" asked Jack, his voice matching Farnum's.

"Indians," answered Art, tersely. "Stick close together and don't make no noise."

It was a situation to tax the nerve of the bravest, and the three boys hurrying along in the wake of Farnum and Art could not be accused of cowardice for experiencing a chill premonition of trouble ahead. Often had Farnum spoken of the cruelty of these far northern Indians. Bitter had been their experiences with Lupo's half-breeds, in whose veins flowed the blood of the Indians of the north.

As they hurried along, there flashed through their minds some of the stories Farnum had told. Had they gotten so far, so near the end of their quest for

the "Lost Expedition" only to be wiped out by Indians, on the very eve of success? Such thoughts raced through the mind of each. But they were determined fellows, accustomed to confront danger, used to tight places. The first onrush of panic was swept aside, and, by the time they tumbled into the little hollow in which camp had been pitched, and where Mr. Hampton awaited them, each had himself well in hand.

Mr. Hampton looked at their determined faces, and a smile of grim approval was his greeting.

"Indians, boys," he said. "Farnum told me. I suspected as much. Now, we have no trees here for bulwark, but this little hollow is good enough. Let us lie down and line the edge of the pit. We'll be pretty close together, and if any Indians stumble on us they'll get a warm reception. Listen." He spoke in a low voice. "There goes that cry again. Does it sound closer? Yes," as the other nodded, "I thought so. Quick. Take your positions. Jack, my boy, you stay beside me."

There was a little tremor in his voice. That was all. But Jack understood. He clasped his father's hand strongly, then threw himself prone beside him, while the others ranged themselves in a circle as commanded.

Once more came the wailing cry from the inland. Once more it was answered in kind from the water.

But to all it was apparent that the sounds were farther removed, and Mr. Hampton broke the painful silence with a whispered:

"They're moving on, moving away."

"Look, Dad," Jack exclaimed excitedly. "I can see those rocks ahead where a minute ago was only the white fog. Why, the fog's lifting. It's lifting, Dad, sure enough."

"You're right, Jack," his father replied, low-voiced, but there was anxiety rather than jubilation in his tone. "That will make it bad for us. We'll be exposed to sight."

Once again came the wail, faint and far away. As faint came the reply from the water. Both cries were to the north. Originally they had come from that direction. Now they were withdrawing whence they had come. What could it mean?

The next minute a rattle of rifle fire broke the silence. At the same time a cold breeze blew across the crouching figures in the shallow pit and the fog began to shred out fast before it.

Farnum sprang upright, gazing to the north. The others also gained their feet. The shooting now was fast and furious.

"I can't understand," said Farnum, in a puzzled tone.

With an exclamation, Jack seized his father's arm.

"Dad," he cried, "you said Thorwaldsson might be near."

"Yes, why—"

"That's it," said Art, in a tone of conviction.

Mr. Farnum turned towards him.

"You mean?"

"Jack guesed it. Thorwaldsson's being attacked."

Jack nodded.

"That's what I meant, Dad."

"You're right, Jack," said his father. "Come on. It can't be anything else. Nobody but Thorwaldsson is in this wilderness. We must help him. Stick close together."

And scrambling out of their shallow pit, Mr. Hampton started on the dead run towards the direction of the shooting, with the others at his heels.

The ground was bare of verdure, and great rocks of the copper ore were scattered around. On this account their view was restricted, but the sound of the rifle fire grew momentarily louder, apprising them that they were nearing the scene of conflict. Suddenly Bob, who was in the lead, having outdistanced the others several yards, rounded a big rock and found himself on a bank above a narrow strip of beach.

Below lay a number of forms, as of men dead or wounded. Two canoes were drawn up on the beach, and behind one of these, using it as a bul-

wark, crouched a man, rifle to shoulder. Farther down the beach were three other canoes grounded, and beside them several forms of wounded men, and five or six men, crouching, firing at the lone defender of the attacked position, creeping up on him.

Just as Bob reached the edge of the bank, the attackers mustered up courage for a rush, and with wild shouts swept forward. It looked dark, indeed, for the lone defender of the upturned canoes. Bob looked back to see how close were his companions, but they were not yet in sight. His dash had carried him farther than he had believed to be the case.

It had taken only a glance to show Bob which way the land lay. The lone defender was the survivor of Thorwaldsson's party, if the explorer's party it was, of which Bob had little doubt. He was a white man. The others were half-breeds, and if Bob was not mistaken they were of the same gang which he had encountered before.

It was distinctly up to him to lend a hand. Throwing his rifle to his shoulder, he prepared to open fire on the crushing enemy. But as his finger pressed the trigger, he groaned. The mechanism of the rifle had became jammed in some fashion. Desperately he worked to release the trigger, but to no avail.

Then the light of battle came into big Bob's eyes. The half-breeds were just below him now. Several

of their number had fallen in the rush, shot down by the defender of the canoes. Four were left, and they evidently were bent on polishing off their lone opponent. So absorbed were all in their own drama, they had not seen Bob.

Clubing his rifle, Bob leaped. He came down on the back of one of the attackers, and bore him to the ground. With catlike swiftness, Bob, who himself had fallen on his hands and knees, gathered himself together, regained his feet, and swinging his clubbed rifle, let out a yell fit to "frighten a wolf pack," as Frank later described it.

The stock of the rifle came down with a thud on the shoulders of another of the half-breeds, felling him as if he had been struck by lightning. So tremendous was the blow, that it tore the rifle from Bob's grasp. But he leaped for another of the enemy, a fellow whose startled face was close to his, seized him about the waist and whirled him aloft to be tossed aside as if he were a sack of meal. The fourth man was dropped by a shot from the defender of the canoe.

"Attaboy, Bob," came Frank's voice, from the bluff above.

One after the other, Bob's friends leaped to the beach.

As Frank and Jack clapped him on the back, and

tried to grasp his hand, uttering enthusiastic praise the while, Bob looked around.

"Say, where's that chap? Why, he's fainted."

Freeing himself from his companions' clutches, Bob leaped over the up-ended canoe and bent above the recumbent body of the doughty defender.

"Why, he's badly wounded," he cried.

Mr. Hampton pushed him aside.

"Here, let me look, Bob," he said. "You fellows help Farnum and Art in looking after the others. The place is a shambles, with wounded men everywhere."

CHAPTER XXII.

OUTWARD BOUND.

It was a week before the wounded could be moved. At close range though the fight had been, none had been killed. When the boys exclaimed in amazement at this, Art shrugged his shoulders.

"More bullets fly in a fight than ever reach their mark," he said. "I've seen men, tough fellows, regular two-gun men, shoot at each other in Alaskan saloons in the old days without anybody being killed. When a man sees red, he don't take no good aim."

The majority of the wounded were not hit in vital spots, but Thorwaldsson had been shot in so many places that his recovery at first was a matter of doubt. It was he who had been the last of his party to keep firing, he whom Bob had rescued in the nick of time.

From Farrell and others of Thorwaldsson's five companions, however, the story of what had occurred had been obtained. They had been on their way

down the Coppermine when they, too, had been overtaken in the fog. They had landed in the little beach to wait for the fog to lift. There the half-breeds, survivor's of Lupo's gang, who had been dogging the trail of Mr. Hampton and his party, had come upon them.

The surprise had been mutual, for the half-breeds had been looking for the Hampton party and not for Thorwaldsson. However, they had attacked, the majority from the canoes, and three who had been scouting along shore, from the land. Surprised thus, Thorwaldsson's party had put up a game fight, but one after the other had been shot down until only the leader was left. He, barricaded behind the canoes, had held off the rest of the attackers until the final rush and Bob's timely arrival.

As the days passed by, with the twilight deepening into short nights, Art and Farnum both grew increasingly anxious to be on their way for the outside. They knew their North, and they realized that the time remaining to them before Winter set in was narrowing down to a perilously small edge.

"We'll have a mighty hard job of it, Mr. Hampton," Farnum pleaded. "What with wounded on our hands, and prisoners to guard, it looks almost hopeless as it is for us to get out. But, anyway, we can't afford to waste time. Can't Thorwaldsson be moved? He'll be all right in a canoe."

"As long as the traveling is easy, yes," said Mr. Hampton. "He will be all right. But how about at the portages? He's lost lot of blood already. He can't afford to lose any more. However, I expect that with care we can prevent his wounds from re-opening. We'll start tomorrow."

Accordingly, on the day appointed, camp was broken, and the party got under way. Frank's shoulder was healed sufficiently to permit him once more to wield a paddle, although still a trifle stiff, and he took his place in the canoe with Bob and Jack. They had another passenger this time in Farrell, whose right arm had been broken by a shot in the sanguinary fight on the river beach. Thorwaldsson was taken in the canoe occupied by Mr. Hampton and Farnum, Art going in one of the other craft with members of Thorwaldsson's party. Several of the latter had been creased by rifle bullets and one shot through a leg, but all could wield paddles.

And so the long trip out of the wilderness began, with the half-breeds in three canoes, deprived of arms and closely watched by their captors in the four canoes bringing up the rear. With reasonable care, it was felt, the prisoners could be controlled until they should near civilization. Without weapons they would be in a hopeless plight in the wilderness, unable to defend themselves against wild animals, unable to provide food for themselves. Therefore, no

attempt on the part of their captives to escape was looked for by the others, until they should near the outlying settlements of the inhabited country.

"When that time comes," Mr. Hampton had warned the boys, "we must be on the lookout, for the half-breeds, unless closely watched, will try to get back their weapons and make a break for it. And I am determined to take them into civilization as witnesses to prove my statement of the murderous conspiracy against us on the part of an eminent gentleman in faraway New York."

Mr. Hampton spoke bitterly, for from all that had occurred and from the accounts, first of Long Tom and of the dying Lupo, and again of Farrell and the surviving members of Thorwaldsson's party, he had pieced together the story of the conspiracy against them.

To the boys he confided this tale, the main theme of which was that when Farrell had told his story to Mr. Otto Anderson concerning the discovery of the oil-bearing region in the Arctic, Mr. Anderson's confidential secretary had gone to a New York financier and sold him the information. He had not been able to tell definitely, however, the location of the oil region, for the very good reason, as before related, that Farrell was not certain of it himself, his vicissitudes in getting out of the country having unsettled his mind. Therefore, this financier had sent

his agents westward with word that Thorwaldsson be tracked.

"Perhaps this financier, Old Grimm, ordered the mere tracking of Thorwaldsson," said Mr. Hampton. "But I doubt it. The attacks on Thorwaldsson's expedition, the disappearance of his ship and crew, all look like parts of a deep-laid plan to attain Grimm's ends at whatever cost in human life. And, on top of it all, the attack on us by Lupo, who was paid a handsome sum down in Dawson by Anderson's former secretary, acting as agent for Grimm, show the latter aimed to put us all out of the way."

"And all for money," said Jack. "It's hard to believe."

"Ah, you don't know Grimm," said his father. "The man who develops this Arctic oil region may become the richest in the world. Grimm is ambitious for that position. He's got a lot of money so far, in one crooked way or another. But he's not one of the big ones yet, not one of the richest. And he wants to be supreme. Well, he has overreached himself this time, for I've got the evidence, and I'll see that we get more in Dawson and Seattle and New York. Mr. Grimm will no longer have the power or freedom to toy with men's lives when I get through with him."

Although Thorwaldsson lay as in a stupor and could not be questioned, the full account of what had

befallen his expedition since it set out from Seattle was learned from the others. First of all, they had succeeded in retracing Farrell's earlier footsteps, and had found the oil region and the river running through it. A thorough survey of the country had been made, with maps showing the outlet by water to the Arctic Ocean.

In fact, the party had made its way out the river into the Arctic Ocean and around the coast into the Coppermine. There they had encountered and made friends with a tribe of Eskimo. They had started down the Coppermine, or rather up, as it flows north into the Arctic, but had been attacked, losing half the members of their party and a large part of their equipment, including the radio. It was after this that the aviator of the expedition had attempted to fly to the outside with news of Thorwaldsson's plight, the latter meanwhile being cared for through the following Winter by the friendly Eskimo at the mouth of the Coppermine, to which they had put back. The death of the aviator, near the MacKenzie, of course, was not known to the Thorwaldsson party until the news was imparted by the boys.

The course followed as they struck southward was not that pursued by Farrell when he had made his way back to civilization. On that occasion he had frequently been light-headed, and it was felt it would be unwise to trust now to his guidance. In-

stead, Mr. Hampton and Farnum decided to retrace their own trail back to the island in the lake where MacDonald had been encountered, and thence follow his course to the Fort of the Northwest Mounted Police.

Day after day they pushed ahead, the nights ever growing longer and colder, with frost on the ground in the mornings. The honking of the wild geese overhead, as they made their way south, also was a warning that the mantle of Winter soon would settle down.

"You see," Art said to the boys one day, "Winter in this country not only means dreadful cold for which we ain't prepared in the matter of clothing or snowshoes or nothing, but also it means there ain't no food to be had. Yes, there's plenty of game now, geese and duck everywhere along the streams, caribou plentiful. But you notice they're all going south. When Winter strikes, there'll be nothing in this wilderness but rabbit and beaver. Beaver's all right—if you can dig 'em out o' their huts. But rabbit—huh! Well, you can starve fine on rabbit."

CHAPTER XXIII.

LONG JIM APPEARS.

WINTER, after all, caught them in its icy grip far north of where they had planned to be when the cold should really set in. This was due to a variety of circumstances. The slowness of Thorwaldsson's recovery was one of the retarding influences, which prevented them making the desired speed. After weeks of travel he was still in a comatose condition, and Mr. Hampton feared his brain had been effected by a bullet that ploughed along the left side of his head. The other wounded, although quick to recover, also acted as a hindrance, especially at the first.

Then, too, the season was unusual. Winter arrived weeks ahead of the expected time. And daily, as the ice on stream and river thickened, it became increasingly hard to break a way. Yet the canoes could not be abandoned, for, once snow began to fly, the travellers would have been helpless on land, without sleds or snowshoes. Sleds of a sort could

be constructed, of course, and makeshift snowshoes made, too, but neither would be worth much, and the manufacture of them would take a good deal of time.

Two sentries were always posted at night now; one by a fire around which slumbered the prisoners, the other by a fire in the midst of a circle composed of the Hampton and Thorwaldsson parties combined. It was Jack's turn to keep guard one cold but clear night, after a heavy snowfall, which had caused a great deal of suffering to all, and had brought them, indeed, to the verge of despair. For they were insufficiently clad, even though the skins of many animals slain for food in the past weeks had been saved and roughly cured for wraps; and, in addition, with the closing-in of Winter game had become so scarce that the camp was virtually on the verge of starvation.

Jack was mounting guard by the fire around which lay his friends. One of the Thorwaldsson party, Swenson, did sentry duty by the other fire. Looking across the little space which separated the two parties, Jack could see the huddled figures of the half-breeds lying so close to the fire, which Swenson fed constantly with fuel, that they seemed almost to be in it. Around him the members of his own party were similarly disposed.

With a sigh, Jack arose, caught up an armful of

wood and tossed it into the fire. The flames at once shot high and, as if that were a signal, out of the darkness beyond came a robust hail.

"Hello, there. Keep 'er goin', sonny."

Into the light of the fire a moment later strode a big fur-clad figure of a man on snowshoes. On his back was a pack which he dropped to the ground with a sigh of relief. Then he leaned his rifle in the crook of an elbow and, pulling off great fur mittens, spread his hands to the blaze, working his fingers gratefully back and forth.

"Cold an' gittin' colder," he announced, casually. "Got a nice fire here."

Jack was nonplussed. In the first place, to find another wanderer in this wilderness which they believed unpeopled was exciting enough. But to have him walk in casually and without vouchsafing any explanation of his presence took Jack's breath away for the moment. Yet Jack knew enough of the woodland lore to realize that hospitality is the first law of the wilds, and that questions distinctly would not be in order. He decided the best thing for him would be to wait for the other to take the lead in the conversation.

This the intruder was not slow to do, beginning even as he eased his stiffened fingers in the warmth of the fire.

"Didn't know there was anybody else in this country," he said. "Been around here long?"

A look of clumsy craft from under shaggy brows accompanied the question. Jack had to smile to himself.

"No; not long," he said composedly. "And you?"

"Oh, I been huntin' an' trappin' 'round here," the other said.

To Jack it seemed the man was an honest enough, even a likeable, type, and yet that he was acting evasively. He decided it would be a good plan to get a more experienced head to help him deal with the situation. None of his party apparently was awake, all being worn out with the terrific strain of the day's travel. But Art lay near him. In fact, his foot was not six inches from Jack.

Unostentatiously, in order not to attract the newcomer's attention, Jack moved his foot to a position where with his toe he could tap on Art's ankles. It was sufficient for the purpose apparently, for, out of the tail of his eye Jack saw Art's body stiffen and his head lift up slightly from the ground. For what followed, however, he was totally unprepared.

Art sprang to his feet, leaped forward and began thumping the newcomer vigorously on the back.

"Why, you ol' son-of-a-gun," he cried. "You ol' son-of-a-gun."

"Li'l Artie, or I'm goin' blind," cried the other, seizing Art by the hand and pumping up and down.

Jack turned in amazement to Art.

"Why—why—you know each other!" he cried.

"Know each other? Har, har, har," roared the giant, in a guffaw that aroused the others about the campfire. "Know each other? That's a good one."

Mr. Hampton, Farnum, Bob and Frank, Farrell and several of the others gathered around, looking their questions, and Art turned to satisfy them.

"Ever hear o' Long Jim Golden?" he asked. "Well, this is him—the daggonedest trapper on the face o' the earth. Ain't seen him in years since he left Circle City in the rush. Where you been, Jim?"

"Trappin'." Jim looked around at the interested faces. "You tol' who I am," he said. "Now tell me who's your friends, Artie."

"Sure," said Art heartily, effecting introductions "Here we all are," he concluded, and then his face fell as he added: "but where we'll be soon, I don't know, nor what's to become of us."

Long Jim looked first at one, then at another, then his eyes roved over the camp.

"How come?" he asked. "No sleds nor dogs nor snowshoes nor nothin'. How come?"

"Sit here by the fire and I'll tell you, Jim," said Art. "The rest o' you, we won't bother you none

with loud voices. We'll jest whisper-like. You'll want to turn in and sleep, so go to it."

Nothing loath, the others with the exception of Jack, who moved to one side so as not to intrude on the two old acquaintances thus strangely reunited, turned in and soon were once more asleep.

Briefly as possible, Art explained to Long Jim the circumstances leading up to their present position. From across the fire, Jack watched them. He saw that Long Jim paid close attention to Art's narrative and that, indeed, it seemed to effect him strangely. For over his open, rugged features, not constructed to conceal their owner's moods, swept doubt, uncertainty, indecision, as if within the man was going on a fight between two contending forces. Jack was puzzled. What could Long Jim be thinking of?

Then Long Jim slowly rose to his feet, placing a hand on the shoulder of his companion who remained seated but looking up at him. Jack unconsciously moved closer as the big trapper appeared about to speak. He did not want to eavesdrop, but Long Jim's expression had puzzled him greatly. What could it mean?

"Artie," said Long Jim in a louder tone than that in which their whispered conversation had been carried on, and one that reached Jack's ears, "Artie, my

boy," he said, "I wish you didn't have them skunks with ye."

"Them breeds," said Art, jerking a thumb back over a shoulder to indicate the prisoners sleeping about the other fire.

"Them same," said Long Jim. "Cause why, you asks me? Cause I got a paradise to take you all to, where you can spend the Winter lapped in comfort. An' I don't want to take no rascals like them half-breeds there. But——"

Art was on his feet, excitement struggling with disbelief.

"What? What you mean, Long Jim?"

"Jest what I says," answered the other emphatically. "A paradise, I calls it. An' a paradise it is. An' the quicker we git there the better, so wake up your friends an' let me talk to 'em. If we have to take them skunks, why, we'll take 'em."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A TALE OF PARADISE.

At the insistence of Long Jim, Art and Jack, who had been called to join the pair, speedily re-aroused their friends.

"I ain't no hand for talkin'," Long Jim declared in answer to Art's requests for further information. "I got to tell this. But onct oughter be enough. No use my tellin' you an' then tellin' the rest o' them all over agin."

Jack smiled discreetly. Long Jim claimed he was "no hand for talking," yet his tongue wagged continually. However, his heart seemed in the right place, and certainly he spoke emphatically enough of a haven not too far away to which they could go for refuge. What was it he called it? "Paradise." Jack was anxious to hear, and wasted no time on gentle methods in arousing the sleepers.

"Lookit here," said Long Jim, as the circle gathered around him. "Art's been tellin' me the trouble you folks is in. Looks to me like you moughtn't be able to make it out o' this country."

Mr. Hampton nodded grave confirmation.

"Well, I know of a place that's paradise," said Long Jim, impressively. "An' I'll take ye all there, an' ye can spend the Winter—warm, game, everything there. Only thing, like I tol' Artie here, is I hate to have to take them skunks o' half-breeds in there. They'll be a-comin' back later an' ruin the country."

"But I don't understand," said Mr. Hampton. "What is it you are talking about?"

"Don't blame ye," said Long Jim. "Think maybe the ol' man's crazy, don't ye? Don't blame ye for that, neither. But, look here, night's dyin' an' if ye stand up an' look where I'm pointin' ye'll see somethin'."

Mr. Hampton arose wonderingly, and the others also stood up.

"Thar," said Long Jim, stretching an arm to the westward. "What d'ye see?"

"Why—a great bank of fog," said Mr. Hampton, after gazing intently. "How strange. Fog in Winter. I don't understand."

"An' ye all think that's fog, hey?" asked Long Jim, turning to the others.

Nodding heads answered.

"Well, it ain't," he said. "That's the vapor from hot springs."

"Hot springs?" Mr. Hampton sounded frankly incredulous.

"Wait'll you see for yourself," said Long Jim, tolerantly. "I wouldn't believe it, neither, when I first saw it. I thought it was fog, too. But bein' as how heavy fog in the Winter were strange, I went to investigate. An' I found paradise."

Then, under Mr. Hampton's skillful questioning, Long Jim told his story. He declared he had lived in this region now these two years, and that since first arriving he had seen nobody except themselves. Drawn by the seeming fog to investigate, he had come upon an almost tropical valley through which ran not only one but several rivers of water forever at the boiling point. These rivers, moreover, he said, were fed by hundreds of hot springs, which bubbled out of the ground in all directions. It was the steam from these which, condensing as it rose above the valley and struck the cold Winter air, had formed the fog which first attracted his attention.

"Once I were in South America," said Long Jim. "Down clost to the Equator. Well, I'm tellin' you, it were that hot all last Summer right in that valley. As for right now, ye'll find it mighty pleasant an' warm, an' when snow falls it's only rain by the time it passes through the heat hangin' over that valley all the time."

"Hurray," cried Frank, exuberantly. "Let's go.

No snow fellows. Get that? I've had all the snow I need for one season, anyway, and I guess I can get along without any more for some time to come."

Mr. Hampton smiled, but, disregarding Frank's jubilation, proceeded with his questioning. And Long Jim, delighted with an audience to which he could talk all he pleased, after having been without companions for several years, continued unfolding new wonders.

This valley, he declared, was about 200 miles long and 40 miles wide. They were now near its upper end, to which point Long Jim had made his way by slow travel and exploration during the two years since his arrival at the southern end.

Game?

At the question, Long Jim grew even more eloquent.

He declared that, due to the heat generated by the hot springs and the boiling rivers, the fertility of the soil was amazing. The vegetation, in fact, achieved a jungle growth. Wild rose bushes grew tall as trees, with stems as thick as a man's forearm and so dense that it was impossible to force a way through them. Willows grew to the size of big trees, with branches so thick it was possible to walk along them.

"An' birches," added Long Jim, "git to be hunderds o' feet tall, so tall, in fact, they can't hold

themselves up but bend over an' touch the ground.

"Likely you think I'm out o' my head. Oh, I kin see it in your eyes. But I'm tellin' you the God's truth, men." And Long Jim spoke with such honest sincerity, they were compelled to believe him. "In sich a place," he continued, "it ain't likely there wouldn't be no game. Why, the animals there is thick as flees on a ol' hound.

"Mountain sheep, goats, caribou, moose, bear, deer, wolves, foxes, oh, every wild animal o' the whole North kin be found there—down in that valley an' in the mountains enclosin' of it. An' I tell you the truth," he concluded, his voice sinking for effect, "the moose git so fat they're almost square an' they're so darn tame ye can almost touch 'em."

As Long Jim's speech came to a halt, Mr. Hampton turned and stared across the brightening landscape to the distant bank of vapor. Soon the short days would end entirely, and the perpetual night of the Arctic would arrive. Only a miracle could save them from perishing, all unprepared to face further travel as they were. Could it be possible that miracle had occurred, and that this trapper was telling the truth?

Jack looked at his father, and sensed what was passing throught the older man's mind. Truth to tell, some such thoughts were in his own. He went up to him and laid a hand across his shoulders.

"Come on, Dad," he said. "I believe Long Jim is telling the truth. And we better make the effort to get to this valley. He may be exaggerating a little, but certainly it looks like a promised land."

"That's right, Jack," said his father, shaking off his revery, and his alert self once more. "We'll have a hard enough struggle getting there, what with having to cross this waste of new-fallen snow without snowshoes or sleds. Well, let's see what can be done."

Eventually, the party got into motion. The canoes were cached, where they could be recovered in the Summer. There was little likelihood anybody else would pass that way, to appropriate them. Equipment was made into packs shouldered by everybody except Art and Bob. These two were to carry Thorwaldsson on a stretcher, improvised out of poles cut on the river bank, and blankets.

Fortunately, the crest of the valley to which Long Jim was guiding them was distant not more than five or six miles. Even at that, however, the going was tremendously difficult because of the mass of new-fallen snow. Had it not been for Long Jim to break the way on his snowshoes, moreover, it is doubtful whether they could have made it, heavy laden as they were. But Long Jim worked patiently backword and forward, breaking down the snow,

and packing it a second and even a third time with his webs.

"How come you were out here, ol' timer?" asked Art once, as Long Jim paused, and he caught up with him.

"Well, I git lonesome a leetle," said Long Jim. "I was prospectin' around in the mountains rimmin' the valley yestiddy, an' I saw you across the snow. Jest leetle specks you were, but agin the snow I thought you were humans. I couldn't hardly believe my eyes, but I come along investigatin'. An 'then when night come on, you lit your fires, an'——"

"Sure was lucky for us, Long Jim, if you ain't a-lyin'," said Art.

Long Jim stiffened, and for a moment was prepared to stand on his dignity but then he smiled in a jolly way that sent crinkly wrinkles all around his blue eyes.

"Don't blame ye for that, 'Artie," he said. "Sounds like I were crazy, don't it? But jest wait till you see."

CHAPTER XXV.

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS.

But Long Jim had not falsified. The valley proved, indeed, to be more even than he described, for as the world now knows important mineral deposits were discovered, including gold, silver, copper, coal, iron and oil. But of the development going on to bring not only this marvellous region but the vast oil region beyond the Coppermine into the world's resources naught need be said now. Suffice it to say that such development is under way, for Mr. Hampton had the ear of the great financiers, and was able to bring it about; and also that Farrell and Long Jim are receiving handsome incomes from their shares in the various projects.

Here the party settled down, constructed huts, and prepared to await the coming of Spring when the snow should disappear from the vast wilderness separating them from the northern edge of the civilized lands and the ice in the rivers be unlocked.

One of the first things done by the boys was to

erect their radio plant, and they succeeded without much difficulty in opening communication with the little Fort of the Northwest Mounted Police on the farthest rim of the settled country. MacDonald and Dick, with their prisoners, had arrived only a day or two before communication was opened, and the two parties exchanged the stories of their adventures by radio.

To Long Jim the radio was as great a source of wonder as Long Jim's valley was to the boys. He could never get over marvelling at it, and every time that it was brought into use, Long Jim, if he were in the vicinity, was on hand, sitting in wrapt and open-mouthed astonishment while the boys operated the instruments.

Much time was spent in exploring this wonderful valley, at the resources of which Mr. Hampton could never express sufficient astonishment.

"It is a freak of nature, of course, boys," he explained on one occasion.

"How wonderful that it should have remained undiscovered for so long," said Jack.

"Not so marvellous," said his father. "Few, indeed, are the people who ever have penetrated any distance into all this vast wilderness of northern Canada. It was supposed, and still is generally supposed, to be bleak and uninhabitable. You know from experience that the contrary is the case. It

is delightful country in Summer, and man is so constituted that, if properly clothed and housed, he can stand any severity of Winter. Some day, I predict, all this vast wilderness through which we have been making our way will be settled. That day is far off, of course, but it is coming. The growth of world population will force the conquest of the sub-Arctic."

The one thing making their stay in this valley of marvels unpleasant was the constant rainfall. For in the Arctic storm succeeds storm, sweeping down from the North Pole in never-ending succession. And these storms which they knew were burying the land beyond the valley under a pall of ice and snow poured torrents of water on them. The peaks of the mountain ranges rimming the valley were buried under snow, gleaming wan in the occasional moonlight between the storms, for by now the long night had come. But on them no snow fell, for as Long Jim had foretold the snow as it passed through the temperate air created by the eternally hot rivers and springs was transformed into rain.

Two events of importance marked their stay. One was the escape of their prisoners, together with some rifles which they succeeded in stealing. Pursuit in the darkness, and through the jungle-like reaches of the forest was almost hopeless and was quickly abandoned. Nor, although vigilant watch

was kept to prevent surprise, did they ever see sign of the half-breeds again.

"It's a big valley," said Mr. Hampton, "and I doubt whether they will attempt to attack us. Rather, they will keep out of our way. They are poorly armed and inferior in numbers, since we have all come together. Their escape, I imagine, was incited by a fear of what awaited them if we succeeded in getting them back to civilization and the courts. Well," he said, with a sigh, "I regret, of course, the loss of witnesses to substantiate the charges of deviltry which I shall surely bring against Grimm. Nevertheless, I am glad to be rid of them."

It was a sentiment in which all concurred.

The other event referred to was the opening by means of relayed messages via the Mounted Post and Edmonton of communication by radio with Mr. Temple in faraway New York. When word reached Bob's father that the Hampton party was safe and sound and wintering in the wilderness, he quit work for the day, despite the fact that a big business deal was clamoring for his attention, and sped by motor down to his Long Island home.

Bob's sister, Della, was sitting in the library, staring spiritlessly out at the Winter landscape. Mr. Temple stole up behind her and, reaching over her

shoulder, thrust the message from the radio corporation under her eyes.

Della's glance fell and she began to read the printed words. Then she leaped up, whirled around, her eyes like two stars, and threw her arms around her father's neck.

"Oh, Daddy, Dad-dee," she screamed.

He held her off at arm's length and looked at her. Her eyes began to fill up with happy tears, and once more she threw herself into his arms.

"Well, kiddy, cry all you want to," he said, comfortingly, patting her on the back. "I guess that's the medicine you needed. You'll be all right now."

Mr. Temple's words bore reference to the fact that for months Della's health had been failing, and she had shown so little interest in her studies that it had been considered wiser to take her out of the boarding school which she attended, and bring her home.

"Oh, yes, Dad-dee," she sobbed, her face buried in his coat. "I'll be all right now."

Then she lifted her tear-stained cheeks and asked anxiously:

"It says they are all safe—*all*? Doesn't it?"

Mr. Temple nodded, a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes, kiddy," he said. "Frank's safe, too."

"Oh, Dad-dee, I didn't mean that," said Della, blushing furiously.

"No need to fib to me, kiddy," said her father. "Bob is only a brother; but Frank——"

"No, you shan't say it," laughed Della, and she placed a hand over his mouth.

Nevertheless, it was to be noted that from that time on Della no longer moped and looked ill, but took an intense interest in all the daily affairs of life, even wanting to return at once to school.

"Marjie Faulkner will be dying to talk things over with me," she explained to her mother.

"Why, dear, what do you mean?"

"Well—you know—she's sweet on Bob."

"Oh, you girls," said Mrs. Temple, with a sigh. "You'll be the death of me. At your age——"

"At our age you were engaged to Father," said Della. "Now don't deny it. Dad has even told me how you planned to elope, but were overheard by your mother who persuaded you to be conventional and have a wedding at home."

Mr. Temple looked across the dinner table at his wife and grinned shamelessly.

"George, did you tell her that?"

"Why not? It was the truth."

"Oh, George. Aren't children nowadays hard enough to handle as it is, without letting them know how silly we older people were once?"

"Now, Mother," said Della, rising quickly and going to her mother's side, and kissing her. "Don't scold Father. Can't you see he's dreaming of that day again?"

And dancing to her father's side, Della dropped a kiss on the spot where his hair was thinning out, and then danced gaily from the dining-room.

Once more Mr. Temple grinned at his wife, as he sipped his coffee. Then putting down the cup, he leaned forward and said confidentially:

"You do remember that time, don't you, dear?"

Mrs. Temple started to say something sharp by way of reproof for his silliness, but a softened look came into her eyes as she stared back. The years that intervened since their youth seemed to slip away.

"Why, George," she said. "You look positively handsome."

As for Della, a telegram to her friend, Marjorie Faulkner, apprised the latter of the message from the Far North to the effect that the lost had been found. And Della soon followed her message in person. Thereafter the two girls were never tired of talking about the possible adventures that had befallen the boys, and while Marjorie sang Bob's praises, Della sang Frank's. Poor Jack, it is to be feared, was somewhat slighted in these discussions.

"I'll warrant you that Bob saved the day for them all," Marjorie said on one occasion. "He's so big and strong."

"Well," flashed Della, "Bob's my brother, and that's all right. But if they ever got in a tight pinch, I'm *sure* it was Frank that got them out. He's got more brains than all the rest put together."

"Oh, Della, how can you say that?" cried Marjorie.

"Well, just because Bob is my brother must I be always praising him?" demanded Della.

For a moment the two girls positively glared at each other.

Then the twinkle began to come, and they laughed.

Then they were hugging each other.

And then they were at it again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TREED BY WOLVES.

ONE more adventure, and that a serious one, was to befall the boys as a final taste of life in the wilderness. One day towards the end of Winter, when the sky cleared after several days of tremendous rain, the three boys who had been cooped up in their quarters and had worn out even the amusement of listening to the Edmonton radio concerts or communicating with the Post of the Mounted, announced they were going hunting.

The supply of fresh meat had fallen pretty low, and additions to their larder would not be unwelcome. Accordingly, Mr. Hampton made no objection to their departure, but insisted that Art or Long Jim accompany them.

"I'd be no good," said Long Jim. "Sence I did that fool trick o' cuttin' my hand with the axe a couple-three days ago, I cain't set finger to trigger. You better go, Art."

"All right, boys," said Art. "I'd like to stretch a leg, too."

The four, accordingly, set out. In the forest surrounding the spot where they had chosen to erect their huts, there was no longer any game, for the animals had come to learn that these strange creatures brought destruction and had decamped elsewhere. Finally, after they had proceeded some distance without sighting anything, Art suggested they strike for a higher level on the adjacent mountain side. The huts had been erected near the foot of one of the ranges rimming the valley.

"Maybe we'll run into a mountain sheep or a goat," he said. "Anyhow, we can see better from a higher lever, for this forest down here is so thick you can hardly see a yard away. The moon's out an' up there the trees is thinner."

With Art leading the way, the party began its upward climb. For some time they toiled upward until presently they reached a level unaffected by the more temperate air of the valley floor, and where, as a consequence, snow covered the rocks. Across a bare shoulder of rock from which the wind had swept all but a trace of snow they made their way and then plunged into a thick woods beyond.

Frank, who was in the rear, laid down his rifle and bent over to adjust the clumsy lacing of a thick shoe pack of the kind they had made for themselves from the skins of slain animals. The others plodding along, head down, did not notice he had

stopped, and kept on going. He spent more time at the task than he had anticipated, and when finally he straightened up and picked up his rifle, they were not in sight.

Frank was not worried, however, for he felt sure he would be able to trace them in the snow and would soon catch up with them. He set out at a brisk pace. The snow grew deeper, however, where the wind had not had a chance to whisk it away, and the going was hard. He had proceeded some distance before he noticed that he had gotten off the trail left by his companions. Angry with himself for his carelessness, but still not worried, he halted to consider what was best for him to do.

"Shucks," he said aloud. "Guess I better go back over my steps till I find where I left their trail."

And with this intention, he turned to go back. Even as he did so, he saw a pack of long gray bodies racing through the trees in his direction. At the same instant they gave tongue. It was a pack of wolves. They had scented him and were now lifting the cry which announced their prey was near.

Frank started to fling the rifle to his shoulder, but then he lowered it. The flitting forms were still yards away. And although moonlight sifted through the bare limbs of the trees, it did not sufficiently illumine the scene to make the wolves good targets. He decided his best plan would be to seek refuge

in a tree first of all, and then he could fire at the wolves at his leisure and with a sureness of aim that would not now be his. These thoughts or reflections flashed through his mind in an instant. The next moment he was putting his plan into execution, and climbing into a tall fir.

He was not a moment too soon, either, for the baying came closer and closer and even as he struggled frantically to climb higher the leader of the wolf pack reached the foot of his refuge, and sprang high into the air. Frank heard the snap of the great jaws, and looked down into a yawning red cavern of a mouth.

The next moment his rifle slipped from his grasp, and fell on the snout of the wolf who leaped aside in temporary panic. Then the rest of the pack arrived on the scene, jumping and snarling, their heads in the air, their wicked eyes agleam as they scented the prey they had treed but which temporarily had escaped them.

Frank threw an arm around the main trunk of the tree to steady himself, for he was sick with vexation at his own carelessness in not having properly secured his rifle. Meantime the wolves circled close about the tree, looking up, and one big fellow even put his forefeet against the trunk and reared high till his head rested on the lowermost branch. Then

he retired to join the others, and all squatted in an expectant ring close about the foot of the tree.

When his vexation had passed, Frank set himself to a serious consideration of his position. And at once he realized that he must try before it was too late and they got out of earshot to attract the attention of his comrades. Perhaps already they had gotten beyond reach. At that he had a moment of panic. Then he grew calmer. If they had moved away, he told himself, they would discover his absense presently and retrace their steps in search of him.

He still had his revolver. At first he did not trust himself to handle it, because of the trembling of his hands. Then he grew cooler. His hand steadied. He thought he would shout to attract his companions' attention first of all. And raising his voice, he sent call after call ringing through the forest.

The wolves gave back yelp for scream, and soon the whole pack was snarling and yowling and making a terrific, demoniac din.

The sound steadied him.

"Good," he thought, "the boys will know there are wolves, anyway."

Their own snarls reacted on the wolves, exciting them. And once more they came up to the foot of the tree, rearing their forefeet against it and leap-

ing upward. It was Frank's chance, and he took it.

With one arm clasping the trunk of the tree, he leaned forward and took careful aim at the biggest of the grey shapes below. At that moment, the wolf opened his mouth in a jaw-clashing howl. It was his last. Frank's bullet plunged down his throat, and the wolf rolled over in the snow.

His mates without a second's hesitation deserted their attempts to get at Frank, and began snarling over the dead body. The sight sickened Frank, and he closed his eyes a moment. Then the thought occurred that, if he added several more corpses to the ghoulish feast, he might divert the attention of the rest of the pack to such an extent that he would be able to slip away unseen, perhaps by making his way through the trees for a short distance before jumping to the ground.

There was no need now for care in aiming, as the wolves were in a thick mass over the body of the fallen, so Frank fired several shots in rapid succession into the mass. The effect was instantly apparent, for two more wolves went down, and the tearing and crunching announced a renewal of the awful feast.

Now, thought Frank, was his time to escape, if possible. He had heard no answering replies, and believed his companions must have gotten out of

earshot. If so, he must depend on his own resources to make his escape. He was about to start swinging to a nearby tree, the branches of which interlocked with those of the tree in which he had found refuge, when the thought occurred that, perhaps, he would be able to obtain his rifle undiscovered by the wolves.

Cautiously he started to descend, his eyes alternately on the snarling wolf pack several yards from the tree and on the limbs he must grip in his descent. He had almost reached the lowermost limb when his grip slipped and he fell.

Frank thought his end had come, but as he struck the ground his hands closed on the coveted rifle, and he scrabbled to regain his feet, flinging the rifle to his shoulder as he did so.

His fall had been seen. One of the wolves turned aside from the outskirts of the pack, where he was not getting his share of the grewsome feast, and sprang for him. The next moment, as a shot rang out from behind Frank, the wolf dropped quivering at his feet.

"Steady, Frank," cried Art's voice. "Give 'em all you've got."

Without looking around, mastering his trembling by a supreme effort, Frank brought the rifle to his shoulder and began firing into the pack, even as the three rifles of his companions also opened fire.

At that close range every shot told and not a wolf escaped. Eleven bodies, including the mutilated remains of the three which Frank had slain with revolver shots, were stretched on the snow under the trees.

When it was all over, his companions gathered about Frank and explanations followed. Then they made their way back to camp.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONCLUSION.

FAR to the southward, late in the Summer, the party containing our friends and the Thorwaldsson party as well as Long Jim Golden, all bronzed and hardy, and with Thorwaldsson recovered in body and mind, swung around a bend in a river and came to the landing which marked the first outpost of civilization—the trading post where was also located the Fort of the Mounted.

A little boy playing on the edge of the pier was first to see them, and whooping and shouting he ran up the bank towards the store. Out of the door of the trading post came a figure in uniform.

"Dick."

"Art."

The two pals were reunited.

And then followed the biggest surprise of all, for out of the store came Mr. Temple and Della. For ten minutes the kissing and hugging went on, while

Farnum, Thorwaldsson, Farrell and the rest stood to one side, their faces set in wide grins.

"What in the world?" demanded Mr. Hampton, at length, holding his partner and neighbor at arm's length. "What in the world brought you here?"

"A motor boat," said Mr. Temple. "That was a surprise for you. When we received your radio message via the post here, which relayed it to Edmonton—that first one, you know, announcing you were leaving for the outside—I decided I would have to be on hand to greet you. So I got into communication with Captain Jameson, and learned from him that I could reach one of his posts farther south by motor car, and then come up the river in a launch. So I decided I would come here to the edge of the wilderness."

He looked at his son, Bob, about whom he still kept an arm, and smiled.

"Good old Dad," said Bob, giving him a hug. "But what brought Della?"

"Oh, the same means," answered his father.

"No, Dad. You know what I mean. Was it love for her straying brother?"

"Well, now, Bob, you'll have to form your own opinion," said Mr. Temple, eyes a-twinkle.

Della who had been standing close to Frank, her hands clasped in his, looked calmly at Bob.

"Marjie wanted to come, too, you know, Bob,"

she said. "But her mother wouldn't let her. She sent you a message."

"Huh."

Big Bob blushed, and let the conversation drop. Nevertheless, at the first opportunity he got his sister to one side, and, snatching the letter she tendered him, went off by himself to read it.

There was room for Mr. Hampton and the boys on the launch, and in a canoe towed behind, and so, after a short rest, a start downstream was made at once. Thorwaldsson and the others set off with them, but soon fell behind amid a gay waving of farewells. Mr. Hampton was to make arrangements for their reception at the next post and at Edmonton. The launch would be sent back for them when the post was reached.

At Edmonton, a thriving city which in the comparatively few years of its existence has grown to the proportions of a metropolis, the boys got their first taste of the publicity which was to pursue them across the continent, reaching its height on their arrival in New York. For word of their coming had gotten out, and hosts of reporters awaited them, representing the great newspapers and news-gathering syndicates of not only North America but of Europe, too.

"You see, boys," said Mr. Hampton, in their hotel rooms, when they protested to him at being be-

sieged every minute of the day by reporters, "you are the center of the romantic interest of the world. You rescued the Lost Expedition and discovered strange new territory. You have had the wildest kind of adventures. How do you expect the world to take that calmly? It can't be done. No, you may as well submit gracefully, and talk when questioned."

The romance of Frank and Della also was exploited by the newspapermen, and pictures began to appear throughout the country, showing the daring young explorer and his sweetheart. When they were taken, neither Frank nor Della knew, but the truth of the matter was that they were together so much of the time it was the easiest matter in the world for a photographer to snap them.

In New York the same thing was gone through with again, only, if anything, worse. And this time, the reporters finding that Marjorie Faulkner appeared to greet the returned heroes, scented a new romance, and questioned the boys about it. Bob and Frank refused to answer, but Jack slyly tipped off the newspapermen that between Marjorie and Bob a real romance was, indeed, budding.

In reprisal, Bob and Frank put their heads together, and gave the newspapermen a story to the effect that Jack was champing at the bit to be off to old Mexico, there to greet a sweetheart who

awaited him, none other, in fact, than the Senorita Rafaela y Calomares, daughter of an old Don who had a palace in the Sonora mountains. And in support of the story they told the newspapermen of their adventures several years before on the Mexican border, when they had rescued Mr. Hampton from captivity and Jack, they said, had fallen in love with the daughter of the Mexican leader responsible for Mr. Hampton's capture.

It all made good copy for the reporters, who had about exhausted the possibilities of the northern adventure, and who now plunged head first into this former adventure, of which nothing had been known at the time.

Jack was furious, and threatened to wreak dire vengeance on Bob and Frank. But the latter pointed out that they had but turned the tables on him.

"Well, anyway," he said, finally, beginning to smile, "you haven't got the best part of the story yet."

Their curiosity aroused, they tried to get him to tell what he meant. But he refused. Several days later he disappeared. When they asked Mr. Hampton what had become of him he finally surrendered and gave the secret away.

"Well, boys," he said, "when we returned I found a courteous note from Don Fernandez y Calomares, saying he was in Washington on busi-

ness connected with the government, and asking me to call. I guess Jack has taken a train for Washington, and gone calling."

With which happy forecast of good luck to come to all three of the Radio Boys, we shall leave them for the present, secure in the belief that if at any future date they go adventuring they will be well able to take care of themselves, and also that they will get into adventures well worth reading about.

THE END.

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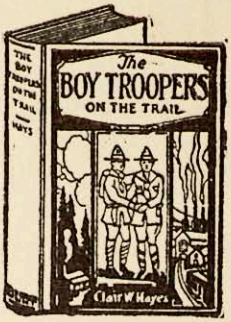

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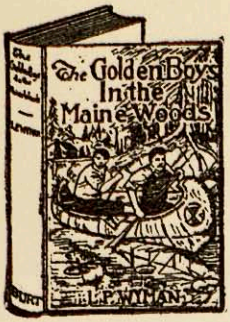

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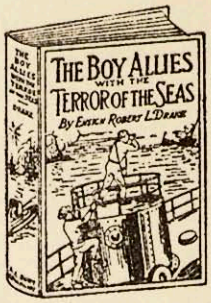

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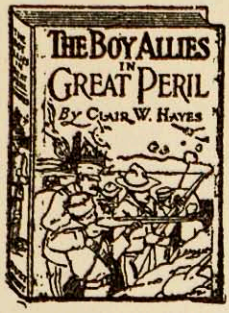

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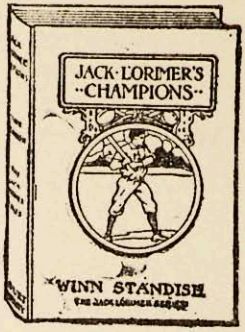

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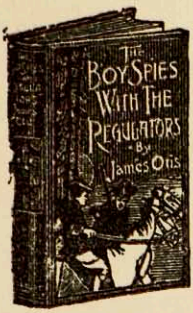

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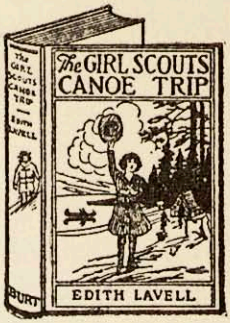

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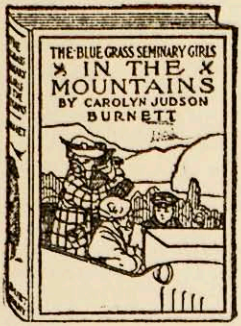

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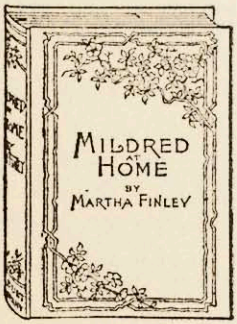

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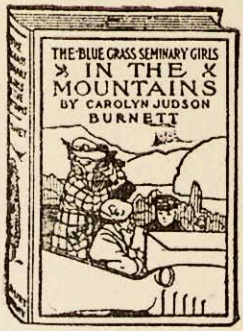

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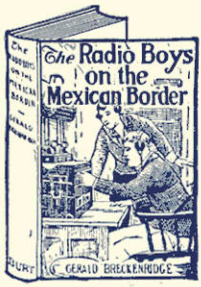

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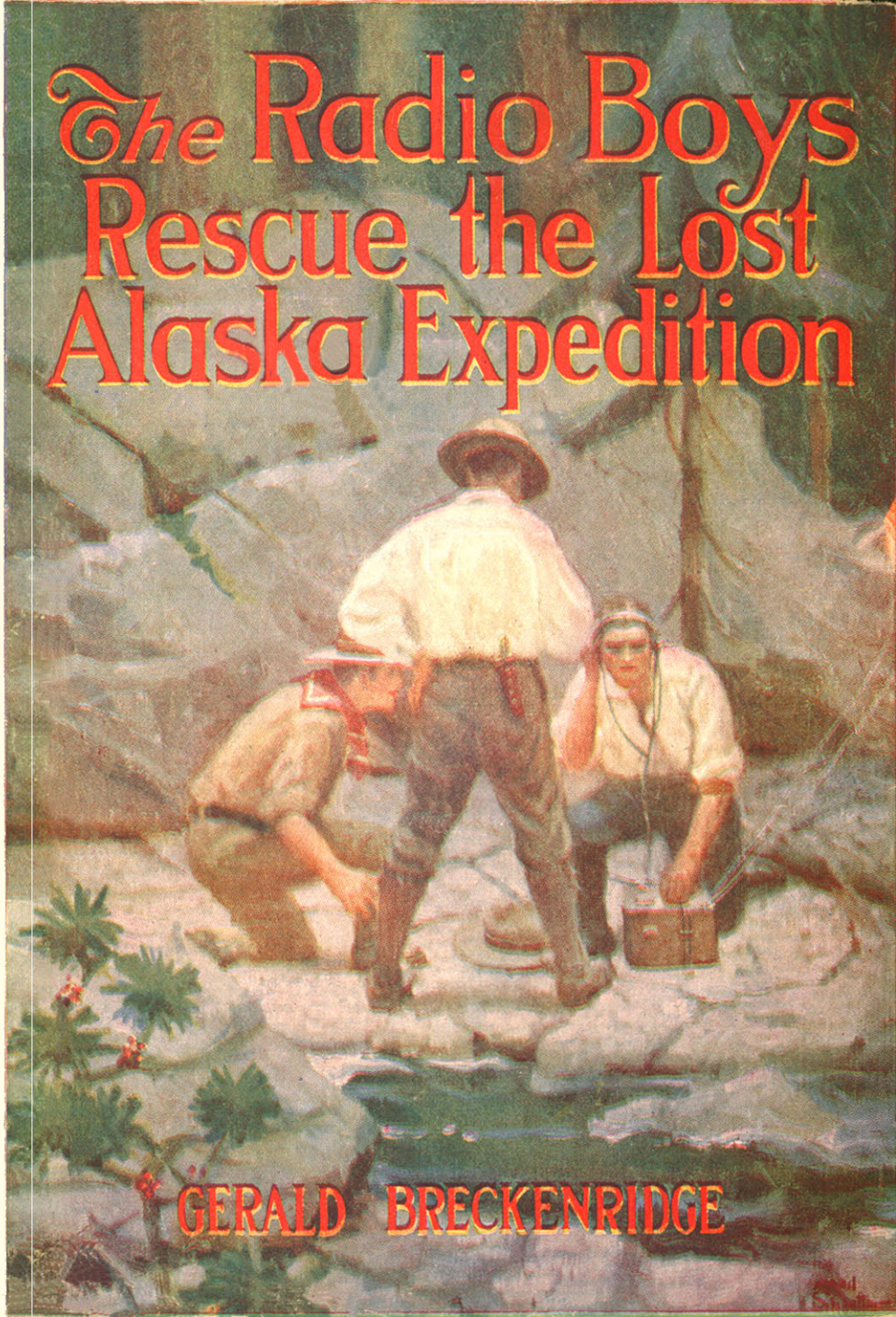

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